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INVOLVING READERS  
IN THE LATTER-DAY SAINT  
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE



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## From the Editor



As I scan the contents of this new issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly*, I am gratified by the hard work of the many authors, reviewers, editors, and assistants that has made this latest installment possible. I am also excited to send this issue to you, our readers, all around the world.

As scholars and users of academic research, we all are curious. We wonder about a lot of amazing things as we try to understand better why things are the way they are and what we should be doing as we go forward in our individual and collective lives.

On these *BYU Studies* pages, I hope you will gather wonderful information about several topics. But perhaps even more than finding interesting and useful data, I hope that you will encounter things to wonder about: good questions, new questions, and old questions revisited in a new light. A classic German handbook on clear writing and thinking quotes Arvid Brodersen as saying: “How does one get ideas, when one has none? One poses a clear, specific question! Herein lies more than most would think. A good question is half an answer (“Gute Frage ist halbe Antwort”).<sup>1</sup>

Scholarship exists to seek answers to good questions. But what are good questions? Good questions probe not only the way things are, but also how things have changed. Good questions help people notice

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1. Arvid Brodersen, “Die Schule des Schreibens” [The School of Writing], quoted in Ludwig Reiner, *Stilkunst: Ein Lehrbuch deutscher Prosa* (Munich: Beck, 1961), 105; my translation.

otherwise obscure details and paint a more complete picture of ideas in their original contexts.

General grazing can be beneficial for daily edification, but a scholarly undertaking has a specific objective and focused plan. As with much in life, if you do not know where you are going, how will you know when you get there? Good questions are not leading questions that already assume a conclusion. Still they are hopeful questions.

Such is the case in the article by Assistant Church Historian Richard Turley and his associate Jeffrey Cannon about the first black converts in Soweto, South Africa, before and shortly after the 1978 revelation welcoming the priesthood ordination of all worthy men. Their research began with questions about the conditions faced by black investigators in South Africa during apartheid. They wondered, as several blacks investigated the Church in the 1960s and 1970s in South Africa and were not allowed to be baptized, what were the concerns of their mission presidents? What role did apartheid animus or the Church's priesthood prohibition play in that decision? When the priesthood ban was lifted in 1978, did governmental, cultural, and old racial views hamper the integration of blacks into the Church community in South Africa?

In asking good research questions, a gospel scholar can at least imagine ways in which knowing the answer to the question would be beneficial for some gospel purpose. Sometimes such answers would help people understand the scriptures more accurately, live the gospel more fully, and respond to difficult challenges or problems more confidently and faithfully.

For Benjamin Spackman's article about the all-important concept of the Atonement the underlying question was, how do the ancient Hebrew meanings of salvational terms compare with the ordinary meanings that we associate with those words today? His question arose when he was intrigued to learn that "salvation began as a military term." From that, a further question arose: What can we learn from these original meanings that might help us understand the scriptures today? Particularly, how can a study of biblical terms such as *redeemer* give insight into modern applications of atonement? And should these original meanings supplant or support or augment our understanding of atonement terminology in our modern scriptures and in contemporary doctrinal discourse?

Good questions like these may well have several possible answers, and a thoughtful person develops criteria to use in evaluating those possible answers. Scholars consider all the possibilities. They ask themselves, "Why do I accept certain ideas and reject others?" They articulate

their reasons openly and honestly. Good questions may then compare, contrast, distinguish, or combine. They usually call for detailed descriptions, specific responses, and focused explanations, which help unpack complexities. Good questions lead to explanations for strange oddities.

Along this line, the primary question behind Eric Eliason's article on folklore, folk magic, seer stones, and salamanders frankly asks: Why are so many Mormons today bent out of shape when they learn that Joseph Smith used a seer stone to translate the Book of Mormon? Eliason, a professional folklorist, wonders how to evaluate and understand folkloristic practices about supernatural experiences. What has changed in America since 1830 that makes Joseph's ready use of folk magic seem so unusual today when it was not seen as so unusual two hundred years ago? And why don't more Mormons know about the place of folk practices in the nineteenth-century Church, let alone in civilizations all over the world even today?

In academics, good questions are those for which one can at least imagine that possible evidence exists. Until well-formulated questions have been asked, one cannot recognize what evidence is relevant and what is not.

Illustratively, the article by Reid Neilson is based on documentary evidence in letters written by Edward Stevenson, the first missionary of the Church to serve at the port city defending the world-famous Rock of Gibraltar. In addition to wanting to know about how missionary work was conducted in the 1850s, Neilson's detailed familiarity with these documents raises and answers many good questions: How did the Church's 1852 announcement about polygamy affect missionaries who were called that year? Can Stevenson's work be called successful? What was it like to spend more than a year proselyting alone? What obstacles did this elder encounter, and how did he meet those challenges?

These are inherently interesting questions, and yet scholars must ask themselves more specifically, "Why am I interested in this question?" Gospel scholars especially have certain goals in mind, wanting to acquire knowledge that can be used in teaching, counseling, persuading, and entreating others to make eternally correct choices. Formulating such goals is no simple task. It requires thoughtful study and experience with applicable goals in mind.

The work of Lindon Robison and David Just models this inquisitive process. They had heard respectable economists simply take it as a given that people are 95 percent selfish, motivated by selfish interests. But these authors questioned that assertion. As economists, their

personal experiences did not square with that assumption, so they devised experiments to test an alternative hypothesis, namely, that people are motivated by a large number of factors. Their study supports their instinct. Knowing that people operate within a complex of interconnected motives, selfishness being just one of them and often not the main one, can provide all people with an improved interpersonal operating mindset.

Thus, a good question is a live question, something one would care about, would be willing to spend resources to actually know about. When relevant needs arise, certain questions move to the top of our interest list. In a project he has conducted for more than twenty years, Robert Lively has asked a host of questions about “who is knocking at my door?” What motivates LDS missionaries? How are they trained and led? What do they do, and how are they perceived? How do elders, sisters, and senior missionaries feel about their experiences? How does serving others affect their own lives?

Good answers are found in all of these articles, giving up-to-date and new information. Gospel scholars have broad perspectives and recognize faddish or passing tendencies in our thinking. To be avoided are misdirection, obsolescence, excesses, and self-serving fads. Self-examination, rigorous peer evaluations, and expert book reviews cap off the process of offering answers to good questions. And this issue features constructive reviews of a fine selection of books about theology, biography, race, polygamy, and one author’s personal missionary memories.

Gospel scholars, like all serious academicians, realize that hard work is involved in the pursuit of truth and goodness. Convenient answers may not always be immediately forthcoming. Scholars and readers humbly recognize that some problems must be held in abeyance, not forgetting them, but waiting and watching for further information to be found. Indeed, if people are watching for nothing, that is usually all they will find. Each article in *BYU Studies Quarterly* invites readers to enjoy these recent results and at the same time to keep looking for what is waiting around the next corner.





Elizabeth and Moses Mahlangu (circa 1992), left, and Frans Lekgwati (circa 1950), right, were part of a group of black South Africans who became acquainted with the Book of Mormon in the 1960s and waited many years before being allowed to be baptized. Photo of the Mahlangus courtesy Neo Madela; photo of Frans Lekgwati courtesy the LDS Church History Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

# A Faithful Band

## Moses Mahlangu and the First Soweto Saints

*Richard E. Turley Jr. and Jeffrey G. Cannon*

The faith of the African Saints is legendary, and the story of one man is often repeated to illustrate that faith. Moses Mahlangu waited many years from his introduction to the Book of Mormon sometime in the 1960s until his baptism in 1980. Two significant factors led to his long wait: (1) the laws and attitudes in South Africa affecting race relations and (2) a priesthood restriction of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regarding people of black<sup>1</sup> African lineage. Through it all, Mahlangu and several others who had been converted through their reading of the Book of Mormon remained faithful to their testimonies of this volume of scripture.

Like most legendary events, there are varying accounts of Moses Mahlangu's story.<sup>2</sup> No single version is universally retold by the narrators of

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1. "African" identity is problematic in southern Africa. Many families with predominantly European ancestry have lived in Africa for generations and consider themselves African. This is especially relevant in the case of the Afrikaners (a designation which means "African" in the Afrikaans language), who are largely descended from Dutch, French, and German settlers beginning in the seventeenth century. For that reason, those with darker skin and typically Negroid appearance are identified herein as "black Africans" or "black South Africans." Those with lighter skin and typically European appearance are identified as "white Africans" or "white South Africans." There is also significant diversity in language and culture among the numerous black and white groups, as well as the "coloured" population, who are of mixed race.

2. Several unpublished oral histories from participants and their descendants are located at the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as CHL). Published retellings

Mormon history in South Africa, nor should that be expected. Even contemporaneously recorded accounts can include variations and discrepancies. Stories reduced to writing decades after the events they describe frequently contain inaccuracies, and if those stories have been repeated in the interim, significant variations sometimes develop—usually unintentionally. Despite the differences in the accounts of Moses Mahlangu, however, the central theme of enduring faith is still recognizable.

Sociologists have pointed out “that the past is not preserved [in memories] but is reconstructed on the basis of the present.” Memory is largely formed by social mores, and “the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories.”<sup>3</sup> Such is the case with the story of Moses Mahlangu. His story is remembered and retold by three distinct groups with at least as many purposes and variations. It is foundational to black South African Latter-day Saints because Mahlangu’s experience helped smooth the way for them and in some ways illustrates their own experiences in the Church in South Africa. For white Latter-day Saints in South Africa, the story illustrates their Christian acceptance of Mahlangu and his associates despite prevalent social norms against it. Outside of South Africa, Mahlangu’s story appeals to Latter-day Saints because it reflects the widely held belief that the divinity and veracity of the faith make it worth every trial or obstacle to be a part of it. In Mahlangu’s African story, listeners all over the world hear the echo of the early American Saints who suffered at the hands of mobs and pulled handcarts through blizzards. Aspects of the story in support of the narrator’s view are often recalled and emphasized in the retelling.

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include Moses Mahlangu, “I Waited Fourteen Years,” in *All Are Alike unto God*, ed. E. Dale LeBaron (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 153–61; “Moses Mahlangu—the Conversion Power of the Book of Mormon,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website, accessed October 12, 2015, <https://www.lds.org/pages/moses-mahlangu-the-conversion-power-of-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng&country=afe>. There are also several public addresses, such as E. Dale LeBaron, “African Converts without Baptism: A Unique and Inspiring Chapter in Church History,” devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, November 3, 1998, available online at [https://speeches.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Lebaron\\_EDale\\_1998\\_11.pdf](https://speeches.byu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Lebaron_EDale_1998_11.pdf); and Ulisses Soares, “Be Meek and Lowly of Heart,” *Ensign* 43 (November 2013): 10–11. In addition, the story is told in innumerable other public and private forums. Each version contains at least minor differences from the others.

3. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.

The outlines remain largely unchanged, but the perspective of the teller colors the details.

This article attempts to create a more complete narrative of the Moses Mahlangu story using several documents that have not been consulted previously. These sources, consisting of contemporary records and later reminiscences, help reconcile some of the differences in the various versions. These sources tell a more complex story than has previously been told. Consistent throughout these records and reminiscences are the faith and perseverance of Moses Mahlangu and his friends.

### **Awaiting the Long Promised Day**

The first Latter-day Saint missionaries sent to South Africa stepped ashore at Cape Town on April 19, 1853.<sup>4</sup> Although their proselytizing was limited mostly to those of European ancestry, mission president Jesse Haven noted in his journal that at least two women of African ancestry joined the Church in 1853.<sup>5</sup> No Latter-day Saint missionaries were sent to strengthen South Africa's fledgling branches between 1865 and 1903, but by 1908 missionaries were reporting that a sizable population of South Africans with black African ancestry had "embrace[d] the Gospel."<sup>6</sup>

Moses Mahlangu was born January 4, 1925, in Boshhoek, South Africa. Mahlangu began to show both an interest in religion and a searching mind at a young age. He recalled attending one church, only to be expelled when he questioned its teachings. He joined another and was again expelled for the same reason. He even started a church of his own on two occasions. His first church disbanded, and the second was still functioning when he was introduced to the Book of Mormon.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Joseph Richards, a missionary assigned to Hindustan, landed at the Cape en route to his assignment sometime in mid-1852. He remained about one month and did some proselytizing but did not record any baptisms. "The Work in Hindostan: Extracts of Letters from Elders William Willes, and Joseph Richards," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 14 (October 16, 1852): 541-42.

5. Jesse Haven, Journal, August 2, 1853, CHL.

6. Minutes, August 26, 1908, in Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings Dealing with the Rights of African Americans in the Church, 1849-1940, p. 5, George Albert Smith Papers, George A. Smith Family Papers, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

7. Moses Mahlangu, oral history, interviewed by E. Dale LeBaron, July 8, 1988, transcript, pp. 1-8, Badger Family Mission Papers, 1905-99, CHL.

Moses Mahlangu's conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began with that first Book of Mormon encounter sometime in the 1960s. The exact circumstances are unclear, but Mahlangu's cousin Johannes Lekgwati may have received a copy from members of the white family he worked for, who had themselves received it from missionaries.<sup>8</sup> Moses and Johannes took the book to another cousin, Frans Lekgwati, who was more fluent than they were in English and could explain the book to them. They enjoyed its teachings and believed the book to be true. A small group of believers, including Mahlangu, Frans and Johannes Lekgwati, Piet Mafora, and some of their families, began to form around the book.<sup>9</sup>

They met in their homes in Soweto, outside of Johannesburg, to study the Book of Mormon because they did not know where to find a Latter-day Saint chapel. In time, one of the group, Piet Mafora, found a chapel in Johannesburg while making deliveries in the area.<sup>10</sup> Moses went to see the building himself, but no one was there when he arrived. When he went a second time, the custodian introduced Moses to Church member Maureen van Zyl, who was able to give him the address of the mission home.<sup>11</sup>

Mahlangu arrived at the mission home on a Saturday sometime in 1968. Following South African practice at the time, as a black man, he knocked on the back door rather than approaching the front entrance. Lawrence Mackey, one of the missionaries at the mission home, remembered the housekeeper telling him someone wanted to speak with them.

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8. For varying accounts, see Jonas N. Lekgwati, oral history, interviewed by Randall J. Knudsen and Barbara Ann Knudsen, April 28, 2013, CHL; Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 9–10; Piet Mafora, oral history, interviewed by Randall J. Knudsen and Barbara Ann Knudsen, August 12, 2012, transcript, p. 3, James Moyle Oral History Program, CHL; Neo Madela, oral history, interviewed by Randall J. Knudsen and Barbara Ann Knudsen, August 19, 2012, CHL; Francinah and Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, interviewed by B. Thomas and Kathleen V. Barnes, February 2, 2014, CHL.

9. Francinah and Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, February 2, 2014; Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, April 28, 2013; Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 12. Mahlangu and Jonas Lekgwati include Isakar Manasha in the group but others do not.

10. Francinah and Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, February 2, 2014; Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 10. Mahlangu includes Isakar Manasha as one who found the building along with Mafora. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 10.

11. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 10–11; Maureen van Zyl to Jeffrey Cannon, email, June 5, 2015.



The mission home in Johannesburg about the time Moses Mahlangu came to the back entrance in 1968, hoping to learn about the Church. Courtesy Preston Crofts.

Mackey and his companion went to greet their guest. They were impressed by their “golden investigator.” Mackey remembered meeting with Mahlangu for several weeks, each time telling the mission president, Howard C. Badger, of the wonderful man with whom they were meeting. Following mission policy, which prohibited proselytizing black South Africans, the missionaries met with Mahlangu but did not teach him. Finally, after three weeks, the mission president consented to let the missionaries teach Mahlangu about the apostasy and restoration.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually, the young elders introduced Mahlangu to their mission president. Mahlangu’s retelling of the ensuing conversation bears striking parallels to Paul’s experience in Ephesus recorded in Acts 19:1–7. Mahlangu recalled telling Badger,

“I am with the Church of Christ, like you, you are the Church of Jesus Christ. I want to unite these two churches to be one.”

“Have you been baptized?” Badger asked.

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12. Lawrence J. Mackey, oral history, interviewed by Randall J. Knudsen, November 20, 2014, CHL.

“Yes. I have been baptized.”

“How did they baptize you?”

“I went in and baptized Mr. [Lukwati<sup>13</sup>] and then after that [Lukwati] baptized me in this church.”

“When they baptized you, did you receive the Holy Spirit?”<sup>14</sup>

Mahlangu confessed he did not understand. Badger asked where Mahlangu and those who baptized him received the authority to baptize. Mahlangu replied that his authority came from the Bible, and the mission president told him the Joseph Smith story and explained the Latter-day Saint doctrine of authority. When Badger had finished, Mahlangu accepted what he had been told and said he was ready for baptism.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike Paul’s Ephesian converts, however, Mahlangu and his friends were not immediately baptized. If they had lived in any other mission at that time, Badger likely would have granted their request. Although the Church’s restriction on ordination for black Africans was in effect, there was no proscription against baptizing men and women of black African descent. In fact, Badger’s first dinner in the country when he arrived as a young missionary in 1934 was provided by a mixed-race family of Latter-day Saints. Badger wrote in his journal for that date, “We went up to Bro. Daniels’ (a colored man)<sup>16</sup> place for a choise dinner, after which a meeting was held—all of us bore our testimonies. The spirit was fine—I’ve discovered nationality and race are not so all-important.”<sup>17</sup>

Notwithstanding his earlier experiences as a young missionary—perhaps even because of them, knowing how uncomfortable members of the Daniels family felt in a largely white church—Badger hesitated when faced with Mahlangu’s request. What should he do? William Daniels had been baptized in 1915, but the situation in 1968 was quite different. Beginning in 1948, South Africa’s government began implementing its apartheid policy, which further codified and enforced the strict

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13. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 11, brackets in original, gives the spelling *Lukwati* for Mahlangu’s cousin Johannes’s surname. Though African orthography is sometimes fluid, Church records use *Lekwati*, which is the spelling used elsewhere in this article.

14. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 11.

15. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 11.

16. In the South African lexicon, “coloured” refers to men and women of mixed race, as opposed to “black,” which denotes persons of all or nearly all black African ancestry.

17. Howard C. Badger, Journal, November 5, 1934, 82–83, Badger Family Mission Papers, 1905–99.

separation of South Africa's racial groups. Scarcely any aspect of South African life was unaffected. Educational and employment opportunities, where one lived, and even whom one could marry were all dictated by apartheid legislation. Even so, South African law, which is often cited as the reason for denying the Soweto group baptism and admittance to church meetings, prohibited black people's attendance at white churches only if church authorities believed they would be a disturbance.<sup>18</sup>

As a former Utah state legislator, experienced with the differences between the letter of the law and actual practice, Badger understood that the technicalities of the law and the realities of South African life were quite different. What sort of reaction would the baptism of several black families from Soweto bring from the government and the nearly all-white membership of the Church in that country?

### History of Church Policy toward Black South Africans

Howard Badger was not the first mission president in South Africa faced with this question. Badger's father, Ralph, had recently returned from presiding over the mission when he wrote Church leaders about the situation with potential black African converts. His August 17, 1908, letter reported "that an old native missionary had become a member of the Church at Queenstown, and is anxious to start an active missionary work among the

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18. A proposal by the government in 1957 would have forced segregation on the churches throughout the country. Widespread opposition from the English-speaking churches, however, forced the government to temper its proposal. In its final form, the law allowed the government to prevent black South Africans from worshipping in white areas only if they created a nuisance or were attending in excessive numbers. Charles Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-Speaking Churches* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988), 18; Muriel Horrell, comp., *Laws Affecting Race Relations in South Africa (to the End of 1976)* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), 119; John W. de Gruchy, "Grappling with a Colonial Heritage: The English-Speaking Churches under Imperialism and Apartheid," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History*, ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 162. For examples of references to South African law prohibiting baptism or attendance at meetings for Moses Mahlangu, see Soares, "Be Meek and Lowly of Heart," 10–11; "Moses Mahlangu—the Conversion Power of the Book of Mormon"; Madela, oral history, August 19, 2012; Maria Dikeledi Moumakoa, oral history, interview by Randall J. Knudsen and Barbara Ann Knudsen, June 24, 2012, CHL.



natives” and “that the son of a Zulu chief had also been baptized who had requested that missionary work be done among the Zulus.”<sup>19</sup>

Church leaders indicated their willingness to accept black converts in Africa even with the restriction on priesthood and temple blessings. In response to Ralph Badger’s letter, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve decided on August 26, 1908, that missionaries “should not take the initiative,” but if black Africans “apply for baptism themselves they might be admitted to Church membership in the understanding that nothing further can be done for them.”<sup>20</sup>

The situation continued to evolve over the ensuing sixty years. In 1940 the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles decided to appoint a subcommittee to determine “whether or not one drop of negro blood deprives a man of the right to receive the priesthood.”<sup>21</sup> The decision seems to have been made in the affirmative. When Evan P. Wright was called as mission president of the South African Mission in 1948, he was instructed that male converts must trace their genealogies outside Africa before they could be ordained and that failure to do so in the past had caused problems.<sup>22</sup> A few of the missionaries were diverted from proselytizing to focus on genealogical research. Where non-African bloodlines could not be proved, men of otherwise apparently European ancestry were denied ordination, creating a shortage of priesthood leadership. In 1952, Wright called the situation “a very serious problem.”<sup>23</sup>

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19. Minutes, August 26, 1908, in Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings, 5.

20. Minutes, August 26, 1908, in Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings, 5–6.

21. Minutes, January 25, 1940, in Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Excerpts from the Weekly Council Meetings, 1. Paul Reeve traces the “one drop” language to Wilford Woodruff’s summary of Brigham Young’s January 23, 1852, address to the Utah territorial legislature. Woodruff’s language became the basis of the majority of subsequent discussions on the topic. The “one drop” language is not present in the verbatim transcript made by George D. Watt. W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); “Brigham Young, 5 February 1852,” George D. Watt Papers, ca. 1846–65, CHL.

22. Evan P. Wright, *A History of the South African Mission, Period III, 1944–1970* (n.p., ca. 1987), 419–20, copy at CHL.

23. Evan P. Wright to First Presidency, November 23, 1949, and Evan P. Wright to First Presidency, April 14, 1952, both in Wright, *History of the South African Mission*, 87, 225 respectively.

President David O. McKay visited South Africa in 1954 “to observe conditions as they are.” While South Africa was hardening its racial attitudes and implementing its apartheid policy beginning in 1948, McKay lifted the requirement that men who bore no physical appearance of black ancestry must prove their non-African lineage before being ordained. “I should rather, much rather, make a mistake in one case and if it be found out afterwards, suspend his activity in the Priesthood than to deprive 10 worthy men of the Priesthood,” he said.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Church’s restrictions on priesthood ordination and temple participation remained for everyone with obvious or proven black African ancestry.

### **Howard Badger’s Discussion with Church Leaders**

Fourteen years later, Howard Badger brought the case of the Soweto group to the attention of Church leaders. Elder Marion G. Romney of the Church’s Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited the mission from August 25 to September 7, 1968, and met Mahlangu at the Johannesburg chapel during his visit. Mackey remembered the General Authority inviting him into the interview with Mahlangu and hearing Mahlangu tell his story. Romney promised to discuss the matter with other senior Church leaders.<sup>25</sup> Concerned about the Church’s overall work in South Africa, Romney asked Badger to make sure before proceeding that baptizing members of the Soweto group would not jeopardize the mission or the legal status of the missionaries.<sup>26</sup> Romney’s holistic approach to the question became the guiding principle in Badger’s subsequent actions.

The mission president contacted government officials for clarification on the law. On December 18, Badger wrote to Mahlangu to inform him that he had “received favorable word from the Bantu Administration, so that if you meet the requirements for baptism into our Church and are willing to dedicate your life to keeping the commandments of the Master, we will welcome you as a member of the Church.” He invited Mahlangu to visit with him at the mission home to “discuss this matter

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24. “Remarks of President David O. McKay at 12.30 PM Sunday 17th January, 1954 at Cumorah, Main Road, Mowbray, Cape Town,” pp. 1–2, South Africa Johannesburg Mission Office Files, CHL.

25. Mackey, oral history, November 20, 2014; Howard C. Badger to Marion G. Romney, December 27, 1968, First Presidency Miscellaneous Correspondence, CHL.

26. Badger to Romney, December 27, 1968.

further with you at your earliest convenience.”<sup>27</sup> Apparently, Mahlangu came quickly. Lawrence Mackey remembered Mahlangu could come only on Saturdays. If so, he likely came on December 21, 1968.

Six days later, on December 27, Badger wrote to Romney, telling the Apostle he had met with Mahlangu and giving more details about the government officials’ instructions. The government had “no objection to our baptizing natives into the Church,” Badger wrote, “providing we do not have the natives meeting with European congregations. They want to have the races kept separate in their religious meetings as otherwise.”<sup>28</sup> The government’s requirement for separate congregations, however, went beyond what the law required and presented a problem for the Latter-day Saint practice of calling priesthood holders from the local congregation as leaders. Black men could not hold the priesthood, and congregations could not be comprised of both black and white members.

Mahlangu knew of the priesthood restriction. “We have explained this situation to the native you interviewed,” Badger told Romney. “Also, we have had him read the book ‘Mormonism and the Negro’, and he says he understands that he cannot hold the Priesthood or receive some other blessings but that it is enough for him to be able to become a member of the true Church of Christ.”<sup>29</sup> Despite the challenges, Badger wrote to Romney that he planned to have Mahlangu receive the missionary lessons “the same as would be required of any white person, and then if he qualifies, we do not see how he can be denied baptism.”<sup>30</sup> Over the ensuing months, however, Badger seems to have become less certain about what to do. As 1969 dawned and the South African summer turned to autumn, Mahlangu and his associates had yet to be baptized.

Meanwhile, in April 1969, Marvin J. Ashton, then an assistant to the general superintendent of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, visited South Africa and delivered to Badger a message from N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency. Badger was authorized, Tanner had told Ashton, to make a decision himself as mission president.<sup>31</sup>

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27. Howard C. Badger to Moses Mahlangu, December 18, 1968, Lowell D. and Lorna C. Wood Papers, 1947–2005, CHL.

28. Badger to Romney, December 27, 1968; Mackey, oral history, November 20, 2014.

29. Badger to Romney, December 27, 1968. See John J. Stewart, *Mormonism and the Negro* (Logan, Utah: Bookmark, 1960).

30. Badger to Romney, December 27, 1968.

31. William H. Bennett, notes on telephone conversation with Howard C. Badger, December 17, 1970, Mission Supervisor Records, CHL.

The onus was now on Badger to decide the fate of the men and women awaiting baptism. At some point, the missionaries taught them, just as Badger had indicated would happen in his letter to Romney.<sup>32</sup> “The missionaries gave me lessons till they were finished,” Mahlangu said.<sup>33</sup> However, Badger seems to have changed his mind about baptism, and the members of the Soweto group were never baptized during his tenure as mission president.

Badger’s about-face may have been the result of instruction from Salt Lake. Lawrence Mackey described being invited into a meeting between Badger and Mahlangu in which Badger read a letter instructing them not to proceed toward baptism.<sup>34</sup> Mahlangu described what may have been this meeting when he was interviewed in 1988 by historian Dale LeBaron, who served as mission president in South Africa from 1976 to 1979:

In America when they searched they found a book that said when they send the first missionaries to South Africa they mustn’t preach to the black people. They must preach to the whites first. After they preached to the whites, the word [Lord?] will say again, and they will preach to the black people. I said to President Badger, “Now what are we going to do?” President Badger said, “I don’t know what to do, because I tried to baptize you and now I can’t escape that word. You can just be like [Cornelius], a man of Italy, who was a very good man, and waiting to receive the word of God or to be a member in the Church of the Jews until the angels came and told him what to do.”<sup>35</sup>

Mahlangu humbly accepted the decision. Badger’s teenage daughter, Carla, however, did not take the news so easily. She recalled her father receiving a letter from the First Presidency and telling her it was “not good news for Moses.” The Soweto group could not be baptized because of an agreement with the government that the Church would not proselytize black South Africans and that the Church had a responsibility to preach to the house of Israel first, he said. Recounting her response, Carla said, “I really went off about that. I was really upset about that. . . . It was really a hard thing.”<sup>36</sup>

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32. See Harlan C. Clark to William H. Bennett, January 11, 1970, Mission Supervisor Records.

33. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 12–13.

34. Mackey, oral history, November 20, 2014.

35. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 13. See Acts 10:1–8.

36. Carla B. Larson, oral history, interviewed by Randall J. Knudsen and Barbara Ann Knudsen, October 21, 2014, CHL.

The three independent reminiscences of Mackey, Mahlangu, and Carla Badger seem to carry considerable historical weight in attributing the prohibition of baptism to a decision by Church leaders in Salt Lake. However, a search of the Church's historical records failed to turn up any evidence of such a decision from this time and instead revealed a slightly later decision and a somewhat more complex sequence of events.

### **Badger's Successor Wrestles with the Situation**

After Badger had been released as mission president in July 1970, Mahlangu petitioned Badger's successor, Harlan W. Clark, for baptism. Clark was a Salt Lake City attorney who had served in South Africa as a young man and whose earlier missionary service coincided with the young Howard Badger's for more than a year. In a letter dated December 4, 1970, Clark sought guidance from William H. Bennett, the assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve assigned to Africa, asking Bennett to contact Badger for information about Mahlangu and his fellow believers, as well as any previous decisions made in their case.<sup>37</sup>

On December 17, 1970—some two years after Badger had written to Mahlangu and Romney telling them that the government had no objection to the baptism—Bennett telephoned Badger at his Utah home to ask about the situation. Badger told Bennett that although the government said there was no impediment, he was concerned that unspecified officials would take actions against the Church, such as denying visas to missionaries, if those already in the country began actively proselytizing black South Africans. Badger was concerned the government would see the change as the Church's going back on what he believed was at least a tacit agreement that the missionaries would not proselytize black South Africans.<sup>38</sup>

Bennett's notes indicate that Badger was also concerned about local Church members' reactions, though Badger named no one in particular. Home teaching and other Church programs would be an added burden or even impossible because the new black members would not be able to hold the priesthood and thus could not assist. White home teachers would need government permits to enter the areas where the black members lived, and if Badger was correct about the government's recalcitrance, the permits might not be granted. Predicting a significant

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37. Harlan W. Clark to William H. Bennett, December 4, 1970, Mission Supervisor Records; Clark to Bennett, January 11, 1970.

38. Bennett, notes on telephone conversation with Badger, December 17, 1970.

number of new black members, Badger anticipated the additional burden would be substantial. In fact, he believed that interest would be so great among the black population that the missionaries would have no time to work with the white South Africans who would be necessary, under policies then existing, to staff the growing wards and branches.<sup>39</sup>

No mention was made of instructions from Salt Lake denying permission. Rather, Badger told Bennett of his authorization from Tanner to go ahead with the baptisms if he chose to do so.<sup>40</sup> If Badger had been instructed not to baptize the Soweto group, he most likely would have told Bennett on this occasion. Instead, Badger took responsibility for the decision himself, offering a rationale similar to what Mahlangu and Badger's daughter Carla later attributed to instructions coming from Church headquarters.

On December 29, 1970, Bennett wrote to Clark to inform him of what he had learned. He advised Clark of Badger's reasoning for denying baptism for the Soweto group and told him he had discussed the situation with Marion G. Romney, who apparently concurred with Badger. Concerning that conversation, Bennett wrote, "It appears that we have received direction from the Brethren that this is not the time for us to move ahead with a program for baptizing the Bantus in South Africa. I am sorry about this situation but when the total picture is kept in mind it would appear that there are very good reasons for going easy at the present time."<sup>41</sup>

Despite his disappointment, Bennett felt that the decision communicated by Romney reflected the direction of the then-president of the Church Joseph Fielding Smith. In a January 22, 1971, letter to Clark, Bennett wrote, "I am sure that his counsel and direction is inspired from on high and I am sure that the Lord knows the reasons why we have been instructed as we have been."<sup>42</sup> This seems to have been the final word until 1978, when the First Presidency declared that the Lord "has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood."<sup>43</sup>

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39. Bennett, notes on telephone conversation with Badger, December 17, 1970.

40. Bennett, notes on telephone conversation with Badger, December 17, 1970.

41. William H. Bennett to Harlan W. Clark, December 29, 1970, Mission Supervisor Records.

42. William H. Bennett to Harlan W. Clark, January 22, 1971, Mission Supervisor Records.

43. Doctrine and Covenants Official Declaration 2. For a discussion of the events immediately leading up to the revelation, see Edward L. Kimball,

## Church Leaders Seek a Solution for Black Africa

Church leaders' reluctance at the time to baptize black South Africans may in part have stemmed from events in West Africa only a few years earlier. Mahlangu and his friends were not the only black Africans to request baptism. As early as 1946, the Church began receiving letters from West Africans requesting that missionaries be sent there.<sup>44</sup>

David O. McKay and his counselors in the First Presidency were concerned for the would-be Latter-day Saints in Africa but were uncertain how they should proceed. Their deliberations lasted years as they considered the universality of the gospel message and the constraints placed upon them by the restrictions regarding priesthood and temple ordinances for people of black African descent.

McKay, who had struggled with the priesthood restriction for decades, told his counselors in June 1961, "We cannot escape the obligation of permitting these people to be baptized and confirmed members

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"Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 4–78. For personal reflections recorded by black Latter-day Saints, see Joseph Freeman, *In the Lord's Due Time* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979) (the first black man to be ordained an elder after the revelation); Marcus H. Martins, "Thirty Years after the 'Long-Promised Day': Reflections and Expectations," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 79–85 (the first black man to serve an LDS mission after the revelation). Latter-day Saint American journalist Andrew Clark visited a Johannesburg ward as well as a branch in Soweto in April and May of 1991 and published an essay including his observations: Andrew Clark, "The Fading Curse of Cain: Mormonism in South Africa," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 27 (Winter 1994): 50. Russell W. Stevenson offers both a narrative and a documentary overview of how Kimball's revelation has affected the Church in the years since 1978. Russell W. Stevenson, *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 159–201, 343–57.

44. For a more extensive treatment of the West African story, see James B. Allen, "Would-Be Saints: West Africa before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 207–47; Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 81–94. Similar requests were made of South African Mission presidents before and after the 1978 revelation. Many black South Africans had found Church literature and become believers. See, for example, Evan P. Wright to First Presidency, June 17, 1952, in Wright, *History of the South African Mission*, 440; Judy Bester Brummer, Reminiscence, in "Witnesses to the Moment: Accounts of the Missionaries in Africa around the Time of the 1978 Revelation Extending Priesthood Blessings to All," ed. Wesley Stephenson, typescript, [5–6], CHL.

of the Church if they are converted and worthy.”<sup>45</sup> His visit to South Africa in 1954 had strengthened his desire to lift the priesthood ban which so hampered the Church’s efforts in Africa, but he believed a revelation from God was needed to do so.

In an address given in Cape Town, he spoke of his experience meeting a faithful Latter-day Saint in Hawaii who was denied the priesthood because of his race:

I first met this problem in Hawaii in 1921. A worthy man had married a Polynesian woman. She was faithful in the Church. They had a large family everyone of whom was active and worthy. My sympathies were so aroused that I wrote home to President Grant asking if he could make an exception so we could ordain that man to the Priesthood. He wrote back saying “David, I am as sympathetic as you are, but until the Lord gives us a revelation regarding that matter, we shall have to maintain the policy of the Church.” I sat down and talked to the brother explained frankly the reasons for such seeming discrimination and gave him the assurance that some day he will receive every blessing to which he is entitled; for the Lord is just and no respecter of persons.<sup>46</sup>

Upon his return from South Africa in 1954, McKay appointed a committee to study the issue. According to Leonard J. Arrington, who heard committee member Adam S. Bennion speak of its work, the Church President “pled with the Lord without result and finally concluded the time was not yet ripe” to lift the restriction.<sup>47</sup>

A decade after McKay’s trip to South Africa, Church leaders decided to send senior missionaries to West Africa who would serve as priesthood leaders and administer the Church. Though black men could not at the time hold the priesthood, they would be allowed to perform some functions normally assigned to priesthood holders for which there was no scriptural requirement of priesthood ordination. Specifically, they would be authorized to pass (but not bless) the sacrament, and they would be appointed group leaders.<sup>48</sup>

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45. David O. McKay, *Diary*, June 22, 1961, quoted in Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 82.

46. “Remarks of President David O. McKay,” 2.

47. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 183.

48. LaMar S. Williams, *Journal*, January 11, 1963, CHL.



On January 11, 1963, the Church announced that missionary work would begin in Nigeria as soon as visas could be obtained.<sup>49</sup> Shortly before the new mission was to be opened, however, Ambrose Chukwu, a Nigerian studying in California, visited a Church building and was appalled to learn of the priesthood restriction. He wrote a letter to the *Nigerian Outlook* newspaper inciting public opposition to the Church in his home country. Other Nigerian students wrote letters to prominent figures in Nigeria, successfully working to keep Latter-day Saint missionaries out of their country.<sup>50</sup>

As a result, the missionaries' visas were held up, and LaMar Williams of the Church's Missionary Department, who had long corresponded with various groups in Nigeria and Ghana, was able to make only short trips to visit potential members and push the work forward. While on his third visit to Nigeria in November 1965, however, Williams was abruptly recalled to Salt Lake without explanation.<sup>51</sup> Soon, a bloody civil war erupted in the country.<sup>52</sup>

A solution like the one proposed for Nigeria might have worked in South Africa were it not for South African laws prohibiting mixed-race congregations. The sizable white membership of the Church in South Africa could have foreseeably administered the Church and its ordinances without missionary assistance, thus creating self-sustaining units insofar as they were staffed by local members and not missionaries.

However, although South African law did not explicitly prohibit such an approach and many churches maintained integrated congregations, successive Latter-day Saint mission presidents and General Authorities were cautious about their church's situation in South Africa. A memorandum from Bennett to the First Presidency in 1971 noted that South African authorities were surveilling the Church's missionaries and that several foreign Protestant ministers had recently been deported for their

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49. "Church to Open Missionary Work in Nigeria," *Deseret News*, January 11, 1963, B1; Williams, Journal, January 11, 1963.

50. Allen, "Would-Be Saints," 230. Chukwu acquired a copy of John J. Stewart's *Mormonism and the Negro*, the same book Howard Badger gave to Moses Mahlangu. Chukwu quoted from it liberally in his plea to his fellow Nigerians to keep Latter-day Saints out of the country. Ambrose Chukwu, "They're Importing Ungodliness," *Nigerian Outlook*, March 5, 1963, 3.

51. Williams, Journal, November 6, 1965.

52. LaMar S. Williams and Nyal B. Williams, oral history, interviewed by Gordon Irving, May 1981, typescript, 20–21, James Moyle Oral History Program.

opposition to government policies.<sup>53</sup> Church leaders were so concerned about losing their only foothold on the continent that the proposed Nigerian mission was set to be administered from London rather than Johannesburg to avoid antagonizing South African authorities.<sup>54</sup>

Under the circumstances then in South Africa, Mahlangu and his friends in Soweto would have to wait.

### **The 1978 Revelation**

The waiting seemed to be over in June 1978, when the Church announced that President Spencer W. Kimball had received a revelation opening the priesthood to all worthy male members. It is unclear exactly when Mahlangu and other investigators associated with him learned of the revelation.

In the 1988 oral history, Mahlangu said that mission president E. Dale LeBaron came to him at some point and announced, “Now the time is arrived for you to be baptized and to come into the Church. Everything is open for you to come now. Come with your families.”<sup>55</sup> LeBaron gave a similar account in a 1998 address at Brigham Young University.<sup>56</sup> LeBaron’s journal, however, made no mention of Mahlangu until Mahlangu came to visit him in December.<sup>57</sup> Mahlangu had waited more than ten years. Now, he hoped, his waiting was over. It was not.

LeBaron and other Church leaders in South Africa had been proceeding with caution. The priesthood restriction was not the only obstacle to full integration of nonwhites in the Church’s South African congregations. They also faced government policies and a culture of deep racial divisions.

For years the Church’s missionary efforts had been hampered by a government-imposed cap on the number of foreign missionaries allowed to proselytize in the country. On August 7, 1978, only two

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53. William H. Bennett to Spencer W. Kimball, memorandum, April 12, 1971, Mission Supervisor Records. Bennett noted that “occasionally, an immigration official will inquire about certain missionaries, but no other surveillance is apparent.” Bennett warned the mission president “that he and the missionaries” should be careful “in their public utterances and behavior.” Bennett to Kimball, memo, April 12, 1971.

54. Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 84.

55. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988, 13.

56. LeBaron, “African Converts without Baptism.”

57. Elwin Dale LeBaron, Journal, January 2, 1979, 358, Journals, 1955–58 and 1972–79, CHL.

months after the lifting of the priesthood restriction, LeBaron met with a government official in the Department of the Interior in an effort to remove the cap on foreign missionaries. He was accompanied by Johannesburg Stake president Louis Hefer and Hefer's first counselor, Isaac Swartzberg, an attorney.<sup>58</sup>

LeBaron recorded in his journal that the official questioned "why we made the change in regard to the blacks and how this was going to be implemented in South Africa." Swartzberg acted as the primary spokesman, and LeBaron did not record how they responded. But their answer must have satisfied the official, who said he intended to recommend granting their request. Word reached LeBaron two weeks later that the quota had been lifted.<sup>59</sup>

Government approval was always a major factor in Mahlangu's baptism. Badger's inquiry to the government in 1968 and his correspondence with Marion G. Romney showed a concern on the part of Church leaders for how proselytizing black South Africans would affect the Church's work in the country.

Government attitudes, however, were not the only local obstacles to Mahlangu's full integration into the Church. Some members of the Church in South Africa welcomed the Soweto group; others apparently did not. Benjamin de Wet, who was bishop of the Johannesburg First Ward when the Soweto group was baptized, wrote that "permission to proselyte the black people and the revelation that all worthy males may receive the Priesthood was better accepted here than was expected."<sup>60</sup> Frans Lekgwati's son Jonas remembers being welcomed and included in youth activities.<sup>61</sup> Mahlangu's granddaughter Neo Madela, on the other hand, recalled that her grandmother, Elizabeth Mahlangu, was offended by the way she was treated when she first visited the Church in Johannesburg, having been called names. She vowed to never return.<sup>62</sup> In time, however, she did return.

Dale LeBaron knew the situation in South Africa very well. He too had served a mission there as a young man and had worked as a Church employee administering the Church Educational System there

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58. LeBaron, Journal, August 7, 1978, 336.

59. LeBaron, Journal, August 7, 23, 1978, 336–37, 339.

60. Benjamin de Wet, "South Africa: A Different View," typescript, 9, in Maurice B. Bateman and Arlen Bateman, *Temple Mission Papers, 1991–95*, CHL.

61. Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, April 28, 2013.

62. Madela, oral history, August 19, 2012.

for several years before his appointment as mission president. When Spencer W. Kimball and other Church authorities visited South Africa in October 1978, LeBaron took the opportunity to discuss with Neal A. Maxwell and presumably some of the other visitors how proselytizing black Africans within the mission should proceed in the wake of the recent revelation.<sup>63</sup>

President Kimball addressed the matter himself in a meeting of missionaries following an area general conference in October 1978. His remarks reflect a joy for the opportunities opened up to those with black African ancestry but also a caution about proceeding too quickly without considering the consequences of the new direction:

I anticipate the day when the Gospel that has come to you and your families and has transformed you[r] life will begin to transform their lives and make new people out of them. . . . We are going forward in this program, shall soon have some special missionaries working in this field. And of course there is no reason in the world why you couldn't go forward immediately as has been suggested by Brother [Neal A.] Maxwell and others, to mention this matter to the worthy people who seem to be living the Gospel. Who seem to be advantageous, who could work into the program and bring joy and peace to many people and who could live the commandments of the Lord. That is basic and important, and then we will move forward with slowness. We want to be sure that we know what we are doing, moving with care and we will go forward with this great program.<sup>64</sup>

Although the priesthood restriction had never been explicitly cited as the reason for circumscribing efforts in South Africa, lifting it seems to have opened the way to more universal proselytizing. However, the missionaries and Church members still had to work within the legal and cultural confines of South Africa.

Kimball's comments reinforced a policy already being communicated to missionaries the previous month and perhaps earlier. By September, LeBaron had been telling his missionaries they should not seek out black South Africans generally but should seek out potential leaders through referrals and other selective approaches. There was a fear that attempting to incorporate too many new black converts too quickly would complicate issues for the Church. However, black leadership

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63. LeBaron, *Journal*, October 29, 1978, 356.

64. Spencer W. Kimball, address to missionaries, October 23, 1978, in LeBaron, *Journal*, October 29, 1978, 356.

needed to be found and trained for the branches that they anticipated would be established when missionaries were called to proselytize in black South African languages.<sup>65</sup>

LeBaron obediently moved ahead with caution. His journal records meeting with regional representative Louis Hefer, Johannesburg Stake president Olev Taim, and Sandton Stake president Johannes Brummer to discuss the matter on November 21.<sup>66</sup> Two months later, LeBaron wrote that they were meeting regularly.<sup>67</sup>

Taim recalled turning to the Book of Mormon for guidance in their deliberations:

We looked at the principles in the Book of Mormon—the relationship between the Nephites and the Lamanites. And when they had harmony between the Nephites and the Lamanites, they loved each other because they were brothers and sisters in the gospel. When the Lamanites joined the Church they were, at certain times, more faithful than the Nephites, and I said, “Why was that? Because they were converted. They were truly converted, and they were committed.” And so we said, “Well let’s look at the principle of conversion, let’s look at the principle of love, let’s look at the principle of respect for one another.”

The true Nephites respected the Lamanites. They didn’t say, “We must change the color or change the language or change the culture. We must just follow the culture that Jesus Christ laid down in his gospel.”<sup>68</sup>

This approach was antithetical to the situation then in South Africa, where white police officers patrolled the streets in armored vehicles, political dissidents were arrested and killed by the police, and black resistance fighters planted bombs in restaurants and other areas where white South Africans congregated.

Church members had to move forward after the revelation in a South Africa characterized by fear, mistrust, and violence. The National Party government feared not only for its political survival but also for the survival of white South Africans and the Afrikaner community in particular. African decolonization, the subsequent political and economic instability, and the concomitant exit of Europeans from the

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65. Daniel J. Cuny, *Mission Journal*, September 14, 1978, CHL.

66. LeBaron, *Journal*, December 5, 1978.

67. LeBaron, *Journal*, January 2, 1979, 368.

68. Olev and Patricia Taim, oral history, interviewed by Dan and Edith Baker, June 4, 2012, James Moyle Oral History Program.

continent terrified them. South African officials were able to convince some Western leaders (particularly Ronald Reagan of the United States and Great Britain's Margaret Thatcher) that the white government in South Africa was a bulwark against what they saw as communist incursions into Africa.<sup>69</sup>

Arguably, although the government's fears may have been exaggerated, they were not unreasonable given the events they saw unfolding around them. It was the self-described Marxist Kwame Nkrumah who led Gold Coast to independence as the renamed Ghana in 1957 and who was ousted by a coup in 1966, beginning a string of short-lived governments in that country.<sup>70</sup> Closer to home, the Marxist Mozambique Liberation Front led the struggle for independence in South Africa's neighbor, resulting in the establishment of the communist People's Republic of Mozambique in 1975. In 1977, Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda declared the Soviets "colleagues and comrades."<sup>71</sup> Thousands of Soviet-backed Cuban soldiers began arriving in Angola in 1975, and the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan heightened Western concerns over the expansion of communism. The African National Congress, which embodied the resistance movement in South Africa, was closely aligned at the time with both Cuba and the Soviet Union.<sup>72</sup>

Thousands of young, white South African conscripts, including some Latter-day Saints, were sent to the front lines of the border war in Angola and were also charged with keeping the peace in South Africa itself. In 1976, a demonstration by Soweto high school students protesting Afrikaans as a medium of instruction captured international attention when police opened fire and killed scores of young protestors. The incident prompted more protests and riots throughout the country.<sup>73</sup>

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69. See Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 495, 588–89; Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa*, 3d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Nota Bene, 2001), 215–16.

70. Documents released in 2001 show that the American, British, and French governments were complicit in the coup which ousted Nkrumah. Ama Biney, "The Development of Kwame Nkrumah's Political Thought in Exile, 1966–1972," *Journal of African History* 50, no. 1 (2009): 84.

71. Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 589.

72. Thompson, *History of South Africa*, 216.

73. See Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 578–80; Andre and Judy Brummer, oral history, interviewed by Dan and Edith Baker, April 26, 2012, transcript, p. 3, James Moyle Oral History Program.

Anticommunist sentiment was strong in the Latter-day Saint community as well. Then-Apostle Ezra Taft Benson frequently denounced communism in his writings, as well as his addresses in general conference and elsewhere. Both Benson's and David O. McKay's September 29, 1967, general conference talks had warned against communism.<sup>74</sup> In his address, Benson encouraged Church members to read a new book by the anticommunist writer Gary Allen with a foreword by Latter-day Saint W. Cleon Skousen in order to educate themselves on communist strategies for disruption and revolution.<sup>75</sup> The next year, 1968, the elders quorum presidency in Cape Town wrote the mission presidency in Johannesburg, suggesting that Skousen be invited to South Africa to lecture on communism. Suggesting their belief that the government would be interested in Skousen's message, the quorum presidency also proposed requesting government consent and assistance for the event. The suggestion does not appear to have gained much traction, and the idea seems to have been dropped.<sup>76</sup>

Eleven years later, the anticommunist feeling continued. After a trip to postcolonial Zambia (previously Northern Rhodesia), LeBaron recorded in his journal his disappointment over what had become of that country, where a Marxist regime had come to power following independence.<sup>77</sup> A majority of Church members left the country, once prospering branches were abandoned, and the chapel in Kitwe was eventually sold to the government.

Fear of communism was also prevalent among white men and women in what was then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe after April 18, 1980), which was also part of the mission based in Johannesburg. The minority white government there was embroiled in a bloody and protracted

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74. David O. McKay, in *Official Report of the One Hundred Thirty-Seventh Semi-annual General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), 9–10; Ezra Taft Benson, in *Official Report*, 35–39. Benson took it a step further, connecting the spread of communism with the civil rights movement, saying, “There is nothing wrong with civil rights; it is what’s being done in the name of civil rights that is alarming.” He added, “The so-called civil rights movement as it exists today is used as a Communist program for revolution in America” and elsewhere. Benson, in *Official Report*, 35.

75. Benson, in *Official Report*, 39.

76. Mission Presidency Meeting Minutes, May 20, 1968, South Africa Johannesburg Mission Office Files, CHL.

77. LeBaron, Journal, April 7, 1979, 382.

struggle to hold onto power in the face of internal violence and mounting international pressure. Nevertheless, Bulawayo Branch president Robert Eppel remembered, “In Zimbabwe in those days we were far more integrated racially than they were in South Africa.”<sup>78</sup> Indeed the government there had made certain steps toward integration. It was in Zimbabwe that the first baptism of a black African convert after the 1978 revelation is believed to have occurred.

Ernest Sibanda had been a Seventh-day Adventist minister, school teacher, and headmaster, but by the time he met missionaries Bruce Black and Dean Kaelin in Bulawayo in December 1978, the war had left him destitute. The missionaries gave Sibanda a copy of the Book of Mormon, and when they returned the next day, they found he had stayed up late into the night, reading by moonlight. Black and Kaelin asked permission to teach Sibanda and were told to proceed but that they must keep LeBaron’s assistants apprised of Sibanda’s progress.<sup>79</sup>

Sibanda was baptized on January 13, 1979, and he was ordained a priest on January 21 by Robert Eppel. On February 17, Sibanda’s wife followed him in baptism.<sup>80</sup> Despite Eppel’s assurances of greater racial tolerance in Rhodesia, Dean Kaelin remembered only a third of the members in the branch raising their hands in a welcoming vote for their newest member.<sup>81</sup>

### The Long Road to Baptism

Across the border in South Africa, Mahlangu met with LeBaron sometime in mid-December 1978. He had first visited with LeBaron two years before and told LeBaron then “that when the Lord allowed the blacks to join the church, he wanted to be the first one to join.” Now, six months after the revelation, Moses sought out the mission president and “desired to know if this would make a difference and whether he could join. When [LeBaron] told him that it did make a difference, he was

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78. Robert Eppel, oral history, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, September 21, 1998, typescript, p. 3, CHL.

79. Ernest Sibanda, “I Am a Free Man,” in LeBaron, *All Are Alike unto God*, 125–26; Dean Kaelin, “Memories of South Africa, Nov. 1978–Sep. 1980,” typescript, pp. [1–2], Wood Papers.

80. Historical Report for 1979, Baptisms and Confirmations, Bulawayo Branch, South African Mission, p. 1, Record of Members Collection, CHL; Historical Report for 1979, Ordinations, Bulawayo Branch, South African Mission, Record of Members Collection.

81. Kaelin, “Memories of South Africa,” [2–3].



overjoyed.” Mahlangu began bringing his family and friends to Sunday School and stayed after to be taught by the missionaries before the evening sacrament meeting.<sup>82</sup>

It is unclear if Mahlangu and the others had been attending Church meetings previously. Frans Lekgwati’s son Jonas recalled that Moses attended the ward in Johannesburg and was fellowshipped and even fed by the members for some time before informing the rest of the Soweto group about what he had been doing.<sup>83</sup> This may have been a mistaken reference to Mahlangu’s meeting with missionaries at the mission home in 1968. Another member of the group, Piet Mafora, recalled they did not attend the ward until after the 1978 revelation. However, Gerald de Wet, the ward seventies group leader, who was responsible for coordinating the ward’s efforts with those the missionaries were teaching, recalled preparing the group for baptism as early as 1975 but remembered that the baptisms were delayed due to the political situation surrounding the Soweto riots in 1976.<sup>84</sup> Jonas Lekgwati also recalls preparations for baptism at the time of the riots.<sup>85</sup>

Whenever the Soweto group began attending, a key element in some accounts that emphasizes the group’s commitment is that they were forced to sit outside and listen through open windows.<sup>86</sup> Although this version has become the *textus receptus*, Mahlangu’s oral history makes no mention of sitting outside, and others take issue with the claim, saying it never happened.<sup>87</sup> In fact, of those most intimately connected with the events, only Dikeledi Moumakoa reports any of the Soweto group listening outside, though she does not report having done it

82. LeBaron, Journal, January 2, 1979, 368. The consolidated meeting schedule did not go into effect in South Africa until May 4, 1980.

83. Francinah and Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, February 2, 2014.

84. Mafora, oral history, August 12, 2012, 10; Gerald Derek de Wet, oral history, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, March 5, 2014, CHL.

85. Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, April 28, 2013.

86. See Soares, “Be Meek and Lowly of Heart,” 10–11; “Moses Mahlangu—the Conversion Power of the Book of Mormon”; Madela, oral history, August 19, 2012; Mackey, oral history, November 20, 2014; Larson, oral history, October 21, 2014. Andrew Clark also related the story of the Soweto group waiting outside. He does not, however, offer any direct quotes from Mahlangu, and his reporting of the events, like others, is secondhand. Clark, “Fading Curse of Cain,” 50.

87. Mahlangu, oral history, July 8, 1988; Mafora, oral history, August 12, 2012, 12–13; de Wet, oral history, March 5, 2014.

herself.<sup>88</sup> Both seventies leader Gerald de Wet and Soweto group member Piet Mafora, who first found the chapel in Johannesburg, make a point of refuting this aspect of the story.<sup>89</sup> Jonas Lekgwati indicated they were not forced to listen from outside, saying, “We would go to church as normal as anything.”<sup>90</sup>

What is certain is that the Soweto group waited another two years after the 1978 revelation for baptism. Why? Although LeBaron had been meeting with local priesthood leaders to plan the expansion of proselytizing to black Africans, some missionaries remembered apathy, if not animosity, among some members toward baptizing black converts.<sup>91</sup> Rather than “animosity,” Gerald de Wet characterized the attitude as “caution.” Actively proselytizing black South Africans was unprecedented.<sup>92</sup> De Wet also recalled that his father, who was then the bishop of the Johannesburg First Ward, disagreed with LeBaron over the mission president’s desire to move forward with the baptism of the Soweto group after the 1978 revelation.<sup>93</sup> There do not appear to have been any baptisms of black converts in South Africa during 1978 and only one in 1979.<sup>94</sup> Necessary support from local leaders finally came around March 1980.<sup>95</sup>

The year 1980 proved to be momentous. South African Mission records show that in May of that year, “African” converts outnumbered “European” converts for the first time.<sup>96</sup> Demonstrating that more than the former priesthood restriction for black Africans had been an issue, mission records also show that the first Indian converts were baptized in June 1980 in the Natal Province (now KwaZulu-Natal). Indians make up a sizable group in South Africa, especially in Natal, which is situated

88. Moumakoa, oral history, June 24, 2012. The Moumakoa’s daughter, Mathagele, also relates this detail in her recollection of the events as told to her. Moumakoa, oral history, June 24, 2012.

89. Mafora, oral history, August 12, 2012, 12–13; de Wet, oral history, March 5, 2014.

90. Jonas Lekgwati, oral history, April 28, 2013.

91. Kaelin, “Memories of South Africa,” [2–3]; Boyd Peterson, *Reminiscence*, in Stephenson, “Witnesses to the Moment,” [3].

92. Gerald de Wet to Jeffrey G. Cannon, email, May 29, 2015.

93. de Wet, oral history, March 5, 2014.

94. Ordinance and action record, Johannesburg and Sandton Stakes and South Africa Johannesburg Mission, CHL.

95. Kaelin, “Memories of South Africa,” [3].

96. It is impossible to determine exactly what is meant by “African” and “European” since “African” could mean black as well as “coloured.”

on the Indian Ocean. On October 26, 1980, the Chatsworth Branch was formed, comprised primarily of ethnically Indian members.<sup>97</sup>

As instructed, LeBaron had moved forward cautiously, but on July 2, 1979, a new mission president, Lowell D. Wood, arrived in South Africa. Like LeBaron, Wood was Canadian and had served a mission to South Africa as a young man. He was aware of the difficulties involved in actively proselytizing black South Africans but was not privy to the discussions concerning the Soweto group that had been going on for more than a decade. Wood's wife, Lorna, who remembered the group in Soweto as "a faithful band of Africans that had trekked to the Johannesburg Chapel weekly," recalled:

Lowell found himself at a period in time when the gospel needed to be preached to the [black] Africans but he also knew he had to be very careful in implementing it. He felt that the [white] South Africans needed to feel the responsibility to reach out themselves and that they would not take kindly to it if "President Wood" had brought all these Africans into the Church and then dropped the responsibility for their care in the South Africans' laps.<sup>98</sup>

The path to the baptismal font was not short. Before members of the Soweto group were baptized or even taught the standard missionary lessons, they were first taught lessons in welfare principles at the request of local priesthood leaders.<sup>99</sup> Only then were they taught the lessons intended to prepare candidates for baptism. Finally, in another departure from standard practice elsewhere, as part of the plan to gain support from existing members, local leaders were allowed to interview black proselytes for baptism. It was felt by some that local leaders, rather than foreign missionaries, were better able to navigate sensitive cultural issues, such as the widespread practices of polygamy and common-law marriage, as well as traditional African religious practices that had proved difficult to eradicate for other churches with large black African congregations.<sup>100</sup>

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97. Historical Record, Section B—Historical Events, South Africa Johannesburg Mission Annual Historical Reports, 1978–81, 1989, 1993–95, 2001–14, CHL; Chatsworth Branch Historical Record, October 26, 1980, CHL. It is difficult to verify this claim in the mission history regarding the racial demographics of baptisms. See note 102 for more.

98. Lorna Wood, *Reminiscence*, in Stephenson, "Witnesses to the Moment," [14–15].

99. Wood, *Reminiscence*, in Stephenson, "Witnesses to the Moment," [15].

100. de Wet to Cannon, email, May 29, 2015.



The Johannesburg chapel where the Soweto group was baptized in 1980. This building figures prominently in the story of the Soweto group. This photo shows the building as it appeared in the 1960s when Piet Mafora spotted it. Moses Mahlangu met Church member Maureen van Zyl here and was told how to contact the mission president. Subsequently, the mission president, Howard C. Badger, introduced Mahlangu to Apostle Marion G. Romney in this building. It was also here that the Soweto group reportedly sat outside listening to services. Courtesy the H. Tracy Hall Foundation.

Reports that some candidates for baptism were living in polygamous marriages had to be investigated and resolved.<sup>101</sup>

The interview process involved several meetings with both ward and stake leaders. Once the local leaders were satisfied, the baptisms could proceed, but satisfying local leaders proved difficult in some areas. A more stringent caution appears to have been exercised by local leaders in the more autonomous stakes compared to leaders in mission branches, who reported to the foreign mission president. Black African names appear on baptismal rolls in significantly greater proportion in the mission branches than the units administered by the stakes.<sup>102</sup> Caution

101. de Wet, oral history, March 5, 2014.

102. Records are incomplete and do not generally denote race, but it is possible to determine a rough estimate of the proportion of black Africans baptized based on the names listed in the records sent to Church headquarters. In 1980, available records indicate that about 10.4 percent of convert baptisms

seemed to have been at least partially warranted when one mission branch, created in a flurry of black convert baptisms, was eventually dissolved because of the types of issues raised by local leaders in the stakes. Similar issues in other branches were also reported.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, on September 6, 1980, Moses Mahlangu and other members of the Soweto group were baptized in Johannesburg. They were not the first black African converts, nor is theirs the only story of perseverance in the face of exceptional obstacles. However, theirs is a story of patience and humility as they waited and kept the faith for many years before being baptized into the church they loved.

But the story is not just theirs. As Benjamin de Wet noted, the priesthood revelation and the baptism of new black members was accepted more willingly by white members in South Africa than was generally expected. Social and cultural prejudices and expectations had to be overcome by everyone involved in a country gripped by racial tension and mutual distrust. Maureen van Zyl, who had given Moses Mahlangu the mission president's address in 1968, recalled that "once the barrier was broken down, a very strong lasting bond was formed between the members. . . . It was difficult at times to remember that there was such a thing as apartheid, but unfortunately, there was."<sup>104</sup>

Instrumental in breaking those barriers was the branch established in Soweto on August 9, 1981. Maureen van Zyl's husband, James, became the first branch president, and Frans Lekgwati served as his second counselor. Moses Mahlangu and white member Craig Russel served as counselors to the black elders quorum president, Robert Mathebe. Nearly every presidency in the branch consisted of both black and white members working closely together as a hopeful portent of the coming end of apartheid in South Africa, which would allow for increased cooperation and progress.<sup>105</sup>

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in the stakes had obviously black African names. In the mission branches that number was about 48.5 percent. If the branches in Zimbabwe are excluded, the percentage of obviously black African names baptized in mission branches in South Africa drops to 36. Ordinance and action record.

103. Steynsburg Branch Annual Historical Reports, 1982–83, CHL; East London South Africa District Annual Historical Reports, 1982–83, 1996, CHL.

104. Maureen van Zyl to Jeffrey Cannon, email, June 10, 2015.

105. Johannesburg 2nd Branch Annual Historical Report, Organization Historical Events, CHL; Johannesburg 2nd Branch Annual Historical Report, Section A—Officers Sustained, October 11, 1981; van Zyl to Cannon, email, June 10, 2015.

As the Church in Soweto grew, largely unmolested by government interference, the world was changing and the apartheid state was being dismantled. The Communist Bloc began to unravel in the late 1980s, and the Berlin Wall, concrete symbol of the Cold War, opened its gates on November 9, 1989. In a signal that the world was losing its tolerance for apartheid, the United States Congress passed sanctions against South Africa over the veto of Ronald Reagan in 1986. Other countries also enacted sanctions and boycotts, convincing many in South Africa's governing party that apartheid was no longer sustainable. In February 1990, a new South African president, F. W. de Klerk, ordered the release of political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, whose decades-long incarceration was seen worldwide as the image of oppression in South Africa. Mandela became president of South Africa himself four years later.

Meanwhile, the new Church members in Soweto gained experience, and black counselors were called as presidents. Frans Lekgwati was called as branch president on December 1, 1985. The branch eventually became a ward. On March 14, 1999, the Soweto South Africa Stake was created with Robert Eppel, the former branch president in Bulawayo, as president. Six years later, Eppel was released and his former first counselor, Jackson Mkhabela, who was then serving as bishop of the Soweto Ward, was sustained by a multiracial congregation as the first black stake president in the new South Africa.

## Conclusion

This article began with a brief discussion of the legendary faith of African Latter-day Saints and the complexities of memory. The story of Moses Mahlangu is constructed of the memories of its participants and the documents left behind. As previously noted, memories are constructed of present perceptions. Memories of past events and attitudes are largely shaped according to the milieu at the time of recall. The Soweto group's story is recalled by its participants now thirty to fifty years after the events themselves and in circumstances much different from those under which they occurred.

More than two decades have elapsed since the end of apartheid. Its mostly peaceful dissolution and the ensuing changes in South African society have been called miraculous, despite the remaining challenges. Even more time has passed since the 1978 revelation extending priesthood and temple blessings to people of all races. Memories of that event and the circumstances surrounding it are also influenced by current mores concerning race and the inclusiveness that many Latter-day

Saints want to ascribe to the Church. The recollections of the participants in this story and those who repeat them are necessarily affected. What all agree on is the persistent faith of Moses Mahlangu and the men and women—both black and white—who waited with him.

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Richard E. Turley Jr. is Assistant Church Historian and Recorder for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has traveled through many countries in Africa to study the history of the Church there.

Jeffrey G. Cannon is a historian in the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has published previously on the Church in South Africa and earned a master's degree from the University of Pretoria for his thesis on Afrikaner responses to LDS proselytizing in the Cape Colony.

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# The Israelite Roots of Atonement Terminology

T. Benjamin Spackman

When Latter-day Saints speak of atonement, they use vocabulary drawn from the scriptures, including common verbs like *atone*, *save*, and *redeem*, and the corresponding nouns *atonement*, *savior*, *salvation*, *redeemer*, and *redemption*. There are other, perhaps more vivid, words for salvific acts, such as the Book of Mormon references to being “snatched” (Mosiah 27:28–29; Alma 26:17).<sup>1</sup> Such rare terms in scripture have not found place in LDS discourse, which tends to use the most common terms related to atonement interchangeably. While they are indeed at some level synonymous, their distinctive meanings gesture toward the possibility of a wider range of conceptions and nuances.

In this paper, after some necessary methodological cautions, I focus on three common English terms—*atonement*, *salvation*, and *redemption*; their usual Hebrew equivalents as rendered in the King James Version

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1. From 1981 to 1994, Mosiah 27:29 carried a footnote reading “Heb. *natzal*, to snatch away from danger, to save; e.g. 2 Sam. 19:9.” Given the absence of an original language manuscript of the Book of Mormon, any such connection must remain speculative, likely the reason for its removal. In the KJV, “snatch” appears only once, at Isaiah 9:20 (9:19 in Hebrew numbering), where it means something like “to cut, slaughter, tear, prey (upon).” See the discussion under “gāzar II” in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997), 1:848 (hereafter cited as *NIDOTTE*). The most relevant definition of “snatch” in Webster’s 1828 edition of the *American Dictionary of the English Language* reads, “to seize hastily or abruptly.” My thanks to Royal Skousen and anonymous BYU and Church employees for assistance.



## T. Benjamin Spackman

Sometime in 2008 or 2009, I was auditing a class by the wonderful Hebrew Bible scholar Mark S. Smith at New York University. A casual remark of his that “salvation began as a military term” led me to examine the variety of related Hebrew terms and English equivalents, as well as usage in LDS scripture. Surprisingly, it turned out to dovetail fairly well with some earlier research and to



resolve some puzzles about Hebrew names, made explicit in the article. When the Society of Mormon Philosophy and Theology announced its 2013 theme of “Atonement,” I gathered my notes from that research and proposed and presented the paper that became this article. The idea of divine kinship struck me in particular as something that Mormons would find meaningful and significant. I feel that there is still much to be gleaned from the scriptures about Atonement and offer this article as an initial foray.

of the Bible (KJV); and their associated conceptions found within the Hebrew Bible. In general, Israelites<sup>2</sup> understood *redeem* primarily in terms of kinship and “family law” and secondarily as a covenantal term. Similarly, *save* and *salvation* are often found in political or martial contexts, where “victory” or even “success” is a more direct translation. *Atonement* is primarily priestly, having to do with ritual purity and pollution. Not surprisingly, current LDS usage of these English terms represents a shift (or several) from their meaning in the sources from which they were drawn. The semantic lines between these Hebrew terms have been blurred in modern English usage, if not erased entirely; they have also become highly theological, eschatological, and heavenly,

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2. I use this term in the broadest possible way to mean the covenant people of the Old Testament, whether before or after Jacob/Israel, or north/south geographically.

whereas their conceptual Israelite linguistic origins are often grounded in the concrete, this-worldly, and practical. After discussing these Israelite concepts, I look at the significance of these ideas for LDS scripture and doctrine. I will suggest that recovering the Hebrew sources of the three terms yields both more theoretical clarity about the theology of atonement and helpful practical understanding of how atonement, repentance, and grace are realized in lived application.

## METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

First, we must acknowledge several necessary overlapping cautions about general semantic issues, diachronic shift, and translation issues.

### General Semantic Issues

When dealing with words, concepts, semantics, and translation, we must tread carefully. In his book *Exegetical Fallacies*,<sup>3</sup> D. A. Carson lists eighteen common ways to go wrong when talking about lexical semantics. To paraphrase King Benjamin, *I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit lexical sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them* (see Mosiah 4:29). Even those with specialized training make these mistakes, so it behooves everyone to be aware of them.

As a means of communication, language encodes meaning into arbitrary sounds or symbols. Any single word in isolation has a semantic range (compare the entry lengths in a dictionary for two different words), nuances and variations, denotations as well as connotations. For the encoder's intended message to be successfully decoded, the receiver must understand a critical minimum amount of the encoder's language and culture. The receiver is able to disambiguate each word and narrow its semantic range because simultaneous overlapping contexts limit it. For example, "bear" by itself may be a verb or a noun, with a variety of meanings. But within the context of "I saw a bear at the zoo," a fluent English speaker intuitively understands that "bear" is a noun, not a verb; a concrete, not metaphorical referent; and that this declaration takes place within some kind of narrative, whether real or unreal. Meanings are determined by usages in various contexts.

Even when speakers share a native language, geography, and culture, misunderstandings can occur. One afternoon in our Chicago ward, a

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3. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 1996).

law student in front of us became very confused after overhearing my wife and me quietly discussing our Sunday afternoon plans for a *tourte*. In our French culinary context, a tart is an open-face pie/pastry and a *tourte* is a pie with a crust on top, as most Americans conceptualize “pie.” The law student who overheard did not share that cultural knowledge and naturally wondered what kind of tort (or “civil wrong resulting in liability”) could possibly involve apples. Although this example is oral, similar things can happen in written language when cultural information is not shared.

Semantic issues multiply when translating across languages and cultures, because of the rareness of one-to-one equivalents, or corresponding words with identical semantic range. Moreover, a *translational equivalent* is not necessarily the *meaning* of the word. For example, the KJV renders the forms of the Hebrew word *paqad* a confusing multitude of ways: “to visit” (Gen. 21:1); “to appoint” (Gen. 41:34); “to muster (troops)” (Num. 1:3); “to be numbered” (Ex. 30:13); “to punish” (Isa. 10:12); and yet others. No other common word has given translators so much trouble.<sup>4</sup> “Visit,” “appoint,” “muster troops,” and so forth are the translational equivalents, but *paqad* does not necessarily mean each of those very different things. It “has a single meaning . . . [and] has this meaning in every context in which it is used.”<sup>5</sup> The single meaning of *paqad* that gives rise to all these translations is “to assign a person or thing to what the subject believes is its proper or appropriate status or position in an organizational order.”<sup>6</sup> Since English lacks a verb with the same semantic range as *paqad*, it must be translated with different words based on the dictates of context.

Cross-language communication, then, is a case of encoding meaning into a word in context and finding a word in the target language that best matches the contextually limited meaning intended by the encoder, ideally a translational equivalent with close semantic range. To summarize, words and concepts are separate things with complex interplay, even more so when we are comparing and contrasting across two languages and cultures.

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4. See the examples and discussion in Stuart Creason, “PQD Revisited,” in *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg*, ed. Cynthia L. Miller, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization vol. 60 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2007), 27–42, available at <https://oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/saoc60.pdf>.

5. Creason, “PQD Revisited,” 41.

6. Creason, “PQD Revisited,” 41.

## Diachronic Shift

We should not expect that a given concept would remain static over the more than thousand years of Old Testament history. For comparison, note the changes in contours of LDS conceptualizations and expressions of doctrine in less than two hundred years.<sup>7</sup> In such a short time, even English has shifted enough that we can misread revelation given in Joseph Smith's dialect of upstate New York.<sup>8</sup>

For one thousand years or more of Israelite history, conceptions shifted with the natural flow of time as well as due to clashing encounters with other cultures: Egyptian, Assyrian/Babylonian, Persian, and Greco-Roman, to name the major ones. The geographic scattering of Israelites into different places (Babylon, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and so forth) also contributed to the process. Even different Jewish groups in the same time and place often had differing conceptions and ideas (compare the Pharisees with the Sadducees with the Essenes). Early Christianity, in its own way, can be seen as one of these Jewish splinter groups, with its own distinct understandings and interpretations of the past. While the purpose of this paper is not to trace diachronic changes throughout the Bible, we can easily recognize that it happened. What I present below is, therefore, a generalization.

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7. For example, early millennial focus has become much less central or urgent in current LDS thought. See Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993). For a different kind of example, note how the apparent import and usage of Joseph Smith's First Vision has shifted. See James B. Allen, "Emergence of a Fundamental: The Expanding Role of Joseph Smith's First Vision in Mormon Religious Thought," *Journal of Mormon History* 7 (1980): 43–61.

8. I knew the English of D&C 121:43 well enough as a missionary to be surprised at an apparent extra phrase in my French triple combination, "Réprimandant avec sévérité *avant qu'il ne soit trop tard*," or "rebuking sharply *before it is too late*." In my ignorance, I had simply assumed "betimes" to generically indicate "at times" and wondered why it had been translated otherwise. After my mission, I consulted Webster's 1828 edition of the *American Dictionary of the English Language*, which defines "betimes" as "seasonably; in good season or time; before it is too late." For another example with LDS terminology, see J. Spencer Fluhman, "Authority, Power, and the 'Government of the Church of Christ,'" in *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 195–232.

## Translation Issues

At least two issues of translation confront us.<sup>9</sup> The first is that we access the Bible indirectly, either in translation or by struggling to learn to read it in a second language that no longer has any native speakers.<sup>10</sup> Both of these processes involve some risk and pitfalls. The probability of misunderstanding increases with greater cultural and linguistic difference between the original language of a text and the target language of a translation. For example, native Portuguese and Spanish speakers residing five miles apart share cognate languages, live in the same time period, and have a good bit of cultural overlap. Translating between them does not provide major difficulties. By contrast, given the chronological and cultural gulf between us and the various stages of the Bible's production, understanding it in the terms of its authors requires far more than simply translating the words. Every translation will fail to convey the full meaning because so little is shared between the encoder and decoder.<sup>11</sup>

The second issue is that mediated access through translation is not a modern problem. The two primary preservation and transmission routes of the Israelite concepts under discussion were, first, oral transmission of fluid cultural traditions and, second, written records, which became accessible only through the "mirror, darkly," of translation. After the Babylonian exile (ca. 586–530 BC), Aramaic and not Hebrew became the dominant language of the Israelites, necessitating scribes

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9. Although generally many words and phrases can be translated from one language to another without much difficulty or lack of clarity, the challenges of translating technical, idiomatic, or abstract expressions can be challenging, if not bewildering. See, for example, Daryl R. Hague, "Pandemonium: A Review Essay of Douglas J. Robinson, *Who Translates? Translator Subjectivities beyond Reason*," *BYU Studies* 46, no. 1 (2007): 123–42. For a classic rumination about the phenomenology of literary translation, see Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

10. Koiné, the language of the New Testament, was a dialect of Greek, and while the dialects and language have changed, Greek has been spoken continuously for over two thousand years. By contrast, Hebrew died out as a living language and is the sole example of a dead language being revived. Modern Hebrew differs significantly in multiple respects from the Hebrew of the Bible. Consequently, speakers of modern Greek and Hebrew are not naturally experts on the Biblical languages and must study and reconstruct them as others do.

11. A popular treatment of this is Joel M. Hoffman, *And God Said: How Translations Conceal the Bible's Original Meaning* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2010).

who could translate Hebrew scriptures into Aramaic. This may have begun immediately, depending on how we understand Nehemiah 8:8, where the scribes “read from the scroll, from the Torah of God, interpreting [translating?] and giving insight so that [the people] understood the reading.”<sup>12</sup>

Like modern readers, people of the Second Temple period (some of whom authored books of the Bible) gained their understanding of previous scripture through the veil of translation. The written translation of scripture into Aramaic (known as a *targum*) had begun by the New Testament period, and Targums were likely read out loud along with the Hebrew in the synagogue. Textual evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Bar-Kokhba find (a second-century cache of Jewish letters and contracts), and the Mishnah suggests that Hebrew was not entirely replaced by Aramaic, but the evidence does not allow definitive explication of the sociolinguistic situation on the ground in the New Testament period.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, it appears that for most early Christians and many Jews, the Old Testament was not accessible in its original language but in Greek translation. Indeed, for many early Christians and Jews, the Greek Septuagint was “the Bible.”<sup>14</sup> In the same way that such influential Old Testament interpreters as Jesus, Paul, and Peter received and worked with it at one remove, through the veil of translation into Greek (or oral Aramaic in the synagogue readings), so readers today labor under the burden of English translation (and English-only language in the case of the Book of Mormon); this cannot but affect how they understood, interpreted, transmuted, and passed on the received tradition, or how we do so today.

The practical consequences of these three points for interpretation are multiple. First, translations of a given passage may vary widely.<sup>15</sup> Second, we cannot make the common assumption that we can determine the meaning of a word in scripture by looking it up in a modern English dictionary. Third, we cannot safely assume that the same English word carries

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12. My translation.

13. See, for example, “Aramaic,” in Edward Cook, *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 360–62.

14. See Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2000).

15. See Ben Spackman, “Why Bible Translations Differ: A Guide for the Perplexed,” *Religious Educator* 15, no. 1 (2014): 31–66.

the same meaning in every scriptural context. The concept of “love” in the Old Testament, for example, differs considerably from “love” in the New Testament, even though both are translated simply as “love” in English. Even in the New Testament, “love” may be the gloss for several different Greek words with partially overlapping semantic ranges of meaning. The inverse is also possible, as seen in the various translations of *paqad* above. We must also be careful not to “read in” modern, quasi-technical LDS definitions to places in the scriptures where they may not hold.<sup>16</sup> This is an irresolvable problem, and that is all right, as long as we bear it in mind. For example, when we say “redeem” over an LDS pulpit, there is no necessity that we do or should intend the same meaning as the Israelites once did, nor is it necessary for us to read “redeem” with that Israelite conception everywhere it appears in our English scriptures. As long as we are conscious of what we are doing, we can and may deploy varied hermeneutic strategies in our approach to scripture. In short, while we must approach carefully and cautiously, this should not prevent us from proposing and contemplating various readings.

## ISRAELITE TERMINOLOGY

### Atonement

Since meaning and usage change over time, dictionaries have to be updated to keep up with current usage. Consequently, the “original” meaning, etymology, or the meanings of a word’s individual units are usually less than fully useful in telling us what a word means in current language. One could not guess at the nature of a *butterfly* from its two parts, and *nice* has taken on very different semantics than its Latin root of *nescius* or “ignorant.” Etymology, then, while historically useful, is neither the first nor last word in semantics.<sup>17</sup>

*Atonement* is the exception that proves the rule. Unlike many other theological words that have come from Latin or Greek, *atonement* was coined as an etymological neologism, built from the meaning of its

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16. This was a point of interpretive debate between President J. Reuben Clark and Elder Joseph Fielding Smith. Clark wrote that “much of [Smith’s particular] argument loses significance when we cease to give highly technical meaning to general terms.” As quoted in D. Michael Quinn, *Elder Statesman: A Biography of J. Reuben Clark* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 214. The chapter containing this quote is available online at <http://signaturebooks.com/excerpts-elder-statesman/>.

17. See Carson’s section “Word-Study Fallacy,” in *Exegetical Fallacies*, 28–33.

English parts, literally “at-one-ment,” the resulting state or condition (suffix *-ment*) of being or becoming “at one” or (re)united, reconciled. The verb *atone* represents a later backformation from the noun, and would indicate the process or action which brings about this state of oneness. Note that this verb does not exist in the KJV; when required, the translators used the circumlocution “to make atonement” (for example, Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35). Creation of the word *atonement* is frequently attributed to William Tyndale, the first to use Greek and Hebrew instead of Latin as the basis for an English translation of the Bible (ca. 1526). However, the venerable *Oxford English Dictionary* shows *atonement* to have existed in print prior to Tyndale’s usage.<sup>18</sup> While not common in his New Testament translation, *atone(ment)* appears in several passages where other translations read differently; in 2 Corinthians 5:18–20, the KJV and Bishop’s Bible (1595) as well as nearly every mainstream modern translation read (using a Latin term) “be reconciled to God,” while Tyndale wrote “be atone with God.”<sup>19</sup>

In the KJV, *atonement* is primarily an Old Testament word. With the exception of Romans 5:11 (“we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement”), all the occurrences of *atonement* in the Bible are found in the Old Testament. Furthermore, examination of the Old Testament distribution of *atone-ment* reveals a high concentration in chapters pertaining to priests and ritual matters, with fully 60 percent of the appearances found in Leviticus. The book of Numbers accounts for another 20 percent. Leviticus chapter 16 alone accounts for nearly 20 percent of all occurrences, which is no surprise when we realize the chapter concerns *yōm kippur*, the Day of Atonement. This concentration suggests that the Hebrew *kippēr* was a technical, priestly term, relating to ritual purity, pollution, and purification. Indeed, its usage is very rare outside of priestly texts and authors.

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18. See discussion by David Rolph Seely, “William Tyndale and the Language of At-one-ment,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 25–42, available at <http://rsc.byu.edu/archived/king-james-bible-and-restoration/3-william-tyndale-and-language-one-ment>.

19. Those translations that opt for something other than “ministry of reconciliation” tend to be either simplified or periphrastic. Compare *The Bible in Basic English* (1965), “the work of making peace”; *God’s Word Translation* (1995), “ministry of restoring relationships”; *New International Reader’s Version* (1995), “the task of bringing others back to him through Christ.”



Linguistically, *kippēr* began with very concrete meaning, something like “to rub, wipe,” which in a ritual setting led to “purge, purify,” as well as spinning off an entirely different meaning of “ransom,” in which “innocent life [is] spared by substituting for it the guilty parties or their ransom.”<sup>20</sup> Comparison has often been made with the Akkadian cognate that figures prominently in Babylonian purification rites, although no firm conclusions have been drawn.

What can we learn about the conception of *kippēr* from its priestly status? Jacob Milgrom’s lengthy study of Leviticus represents a deep but accessible source among the many studies that have investigated *kippēr*. According to Milgrom, *kippēr* underwent a gradual shift in meaning. Only in the final stage did it yield “the abstract figurative notion ‘atone’ or ‘expiate.’ . . . Having begun as an action that eliminates dangerous impurity by absorbing it through direct contact (rubbing off) or indirectly (as a ransom/substitute), *kippēr* develops into the process of expiation in general . . . [in which] the offerer is cleansed of his impurities/sins and becomes reconciled, ‘at one’ with God.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus the *JPS Torah Commentary* can write that the

ancient view of Yom Kippur is somewhat different from that which came to predominate in later Judaism, especially in the centuries following the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Atonement for the sins of the people eventually replaced the purification of the sanctuary per se as the central theme of Yom Kippur. This shift of emphasis is already suggested in verse 30: “For on this day atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Lord.” The purification of the sanctuary was understood to extend to the people—to relieve them of their transgressions as well. However, no ritual of purification was actually performed over the people, as was the case on other occasions.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1082. Milgrom has also written about this generally in an LDS context, “The Temple in Biblical Israel: Kinships of Meaning,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 57–65. Compare *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (CAD), *kapāru* meaning “to wipe off,” “to smear on,” and in a related form, *kuppuru*, “to wipe off, to clean objects, to rub, to purify magically.” The entire CAD is available freely from the publisher at <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/assyrian-dictionary-oriental-institute-university-chicago-cad>.

21. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1083.

22. Baruch Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 99.

At the earliest stage, then, Yom Kippur and *kippēr* were narrowly concerned with cleansing of ritual impurity and pollution and, secondarily, removal of sin from the sanctuary. Since the buildup of sin and pollution eventually resulted in the catastrophic departure of the temple's deity,<sup>23</sup> purging it of that sin and pollution had the effect of repairing or maintaining the deity's presence and blessing. In a sense, then, while the term was more limited, the roots of *atonement* as bringing two back together, healing a rift, were already present. "On one level [English atone-ment] is, in fact, a good definition of the basic effect that to atone, make atonement (the vb. [*kapar*]) had in the relationship between God and human beings within the Israelite cultic sacrificial system."<sup>24</sup>

### Salvation

While *salvation* continues to be used with some ambiguity,<sup>25</sup> LDS usage of the verb *save* in the sense of "being saved" is relatively rare. Elder Dallin H. Oaks points out that such language "can be puzzling to members of [the LDS Church] because it is not our usual way of speaking."<sup>26</sup> This perhaps is a reaction to perceptions of Protestant "cheap grace" or to avoid importing any Protestant connotations culturally attached to the term. Robert Millet's story about preparing for his mission illustrates such a kind of "theological cooties":

After spending several days browsing through some of the great doctrinal chapters in the Book of Mormon, I approached my father with a question. (I need to add at this point that my father had grown up

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23. Ezekiel 10 records the vision of Yahweh abandoning the Israelite temple. Verse 18 records the "glory [presence] of Yahweh" physically leaving. In 11:22, Yahweh leaves the city as well.

24. See *NIDOTTE*, s.v. "[*kapar*]," 2:689–709. Hugh Nibley provides an expansive interpretation of *kippēr* in "The Meaning of the Atonement," in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 554–614.

25. Compare Bruce R. McConkie's usage and definition under "Salvation" and "Exaltation" in *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966). McConkie writes under the latter topic, "Although salvation may be defined in many ways to mean many things, in its most pure and perfect definition it is a synonym for exaltation" (257). Regarding the former, he distinguishes between "general or unconditional salvation" and "conditional or individual salvation" (669). Elder Oaks also points out that "as Latter-day Saints use the words *saved* and *salvation*, there are at least six different meanings." Dallin H. Oaks, "Have You Been Saved?" *Ensign* 28, no. 5 (1998): 55.

26. Oaks, "Have You Been Saved?" 55.

in Louisiana as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, taught seminary to the youth for many years, and knew the principles and doctrines of the gospel well.) I asked, “Dad, what does it mean to be saved by grace?” He stared at me for a moment and then said firmly, “We don’t believe in that!” I responded with, “We don’t believe in it? Why not?” He promptly added, “Because the Baptists do!”<sup>27</sup>

In the KJV of the Old Testament, *salvation* and *save* represent forms of *yasha'*.<sup>28</sup> This verb happens to be familiar to English speakers from “hosanna” (Heb. *hoshiya' na*), meaning “save please!” and later becoming an acclamation of praise (Matt. 21:9).<sup>29</sup> In the Old Testament, this salvation primarily represents a very practical need of the here-and-now, not a future promise of wiping away the effects of death or sin. (Sin, with its accompanying ritual pollution, would have likely fallen under “atonement.”) The book of Psalms, for example, contains the heaviest concentration, accounting for 30 percent of the usage of *yasha'* in the Bible. Scot McKnight writes, “The focus of the various images for salvation and deliverance in the psalms is on personal deliverance from enemies and life’s real troubles rather than, as is often the case in Christian theology, on images of salvation in the afterlife for the individual. . . . It is this focus on real-life problems, such as being surrounded by enemies intent on killing the psalmist, that gives to the psalms a potent vision not only of salvation but also of a life of faith, a life of prayer, and a life of petitioning God for deliverance from physical dangers.”<sup>30</sup>

While *yasha'* had the general meaning of “save, help,” this salvation often had martial contexts. When the Psalmist repeatedly pleads for “salvation,” it is not a prayer for atonement and afterlife, but a plea for national victory in war or deliverance from other nations. In Psalm 21, for example, “The salvation which God gives the king is primarily the conquest of his

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27. Robert L. Millet, “Joseph Smith’s Christology: After Two Hundred Years,” in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2006), 233.

28. With three exceptions found in poetry (Job 5:4, 11, and Ps. 12:5), forms of *yasha'* are always translated as *save*, *salvation*, or *saviour* in the KJV. Similarly, all forms of *save* are translated from forms of *yasha'* except Gen. 19:19, Eccl. 5:11, and Amos 9:8. In the latter two, *saving* means “except, but for.”

29. The phrase does not actually appear in the Hebrew Bible.

30. Scot McKnight, “Salvation and Deliverance, Imagery,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008).

enemies.”<sup>31</sup> The book of Judges accounts for another 10 percent of the usages of *yasha*ʿ, the highest concentration in the historical books. Several judges there are called *moshia*ʿ<sup>32</sup> or “savior” (*moshia*ʿ is a present participle of *yasha*ʿ), but that salvation is military or political. “In all these cases [in Judges] the salvation in question clearly is political—that is, military victory. The terms *saved* and *savior*, understood in this sense, are at least as important for understanding the roles of Israel’s judges as *judged* and *judge*.”<sup>33</sup> Consequently, what the KJV translates as “salvation” and “save” is rendered as “victory” or “give victory” in other translations—for example, Psalm 20:6, 9 (JPS Tanakh); 44:6–7 (NAB);<sup>34</sup> 118:15 (NRS);<sup>35</sup> and particularly clearly, 144:10 (NRS, NIV, JPS).

This martial usage extends beyond Psalms and Judges into most other books of the Hebrew Bible. Israel’s founding emancipation from Egypt is repeatedly referred to using forms of *yasha*ʿ. For example, Exodus 14:13 looks forward to “the deliverance [*yāshūʿah*] Yahweh will bring” and after the drowning of the pursuing Egyptian army, it is said “thus Yahweh saved [*yasha*ʿ] Israel that day from the power of the Egyptians” (Ex. 14:30). While other uses in the legal and prophetic realm echo this imminent kind of “salvation,” it is God’s deliverance from slavery and the power of Egypt that will later be spiritualized, providing a model of divine aid in saving from foes far too great for mortals, namely, sin and death. Thus was Jesus named *yēshūa*ʿ, because he would “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). This spiritualized usage then became dominant in Christian theology and thought.

## Redemption

Let me introduce this third term with an observation, then an anecdote. Outside of theological settings, Americans find *redeem* most often at the grocery store, where coupons are redeemed. The store distributes coupons and then buys them back, or redeems them, and, indeed,

31. John Barton and John Muddiman, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 373.

32. For an LDS exploration of this term, see John W. Welch, “What Was a ‘Mosiah?’” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 105–7.

33. P. E. Satterthwaite, “Judges,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, ed. Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 581.

34. New American Bible, Revised Edition (2010).

35. New Revised Standard Version.

buying something back is one of the oldest English meanings of *redeem*.<sup>36</sup> Some other languages make this meaning clear—for example, French *racheter*.<sup>37</sup> Made of the common prefix *re-* “again, back” and *acheter* “to buy, purchase,” *racheter* literally means “to buy back, repurchase.” However our relatively modern North American usage<sup>38</sup> of redeeming coupons came about, it accurately reflects one of the functions of redemption in Israel, which was not theological but monetary. In “the Bible [redemption] retains its literal, commercial sense, as in reclaiming a pawned item or mortgaged property.”<sup>39</sup>

My interest in redemption in Israel began with the seemingly unrelated topic of Hebrew proper names. Most names in American English today are not natively English; while they may have meaning in some other language, they are usually chosen because of trends, associations, pleasing sounds, or family traditions. When I first started studying Hebrew, I learned that many Hebrew proper names had Hebrew meaning, often with some significance.<sup>40</sup> Naomi originally meant “pleasant” and Mara “bitter,” for example; and the meaning of names often can have some significance for the narrative in which they are found.

While still an undergraduate, I came across the name “God is (my) father,” Abijah/Joab/Eliab.<sup>41</sup> A recently returned missionary, I naturally

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36. The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* lists examples as far back as AD 1425.

37. English *redeem* apparently comes from Latin through French *redimer*, which current French replaced with *racheter*.

38. The *OED* connects the specific usage of “redeem” with coupons to the U.S. in 1897, though the general idea goes back much further.

39. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 271, note to Leviticus 25:24.

40. For an easily accessible list, see Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, “Israelite Names: Witnesses of Deity,” *Ensign* 20, no. 12 (1990): 52–54, available at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1990/12/israelite-names-witnesses-of-deity?lang=eng>.

41. While it is a complicated subject, the Hebrew Bible rarely distinguishes between *’el/’elohim* (KJV “God”) and *yahweh* (KJV “LORD” or “Jehovah”), and I do not distinguish here between their respective theophoric elements *’el* and *yah*, translating both simply as “God.” The LDS adoption of *Elohim* and *Jehovah* to designate (respectively) the Father and the Son represents a conventional adaptation of these Hebrew terms and does not reflect either Old Testament usage or early LDS usage. Doctrine and Covenants 109 likely uses “Jehovah” as a reference to the Father, and as late as 1961 President McKay was known to (accidentally?) speak of “Jehovah and his son, Jesus Christ.” For this and other examples, see Barry R. Bickmore, “Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism,” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 1 (2003): 215–58; Ryan Conrad Davis and Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Usage of the Title *Elohim*,” *Religious Educator* 14, no. 1

characterized this as a doctrinal reflection of the fatherhood of God. Sometime later, I encountered Ahijah/Joah, “God is (my) brother.” Although a little surprised, I decided this name represented an allusion to the premortal Jesus’s status as our elder brother.<sup>42</sup> One last name really threw me for a loop and broke my simplistic paradigm: “God is (my) uncle,” Ammiel/Eliam.<sup>43</sup> I could not easily integrate this expression of Israelite worldview into my own LDS conception.<sup>44</sup> In what possible sense could God be one’s uncle?

Several years later, after encountering some of the scholarship cited here, I realized that “father,” “brother,” and “uncle” were all “kinship” terms.<sup>45</sup> Far from reflecting various LDS doctrines, each of these names expressed one very important Israelite concept: divine kinship, or kinship with God. Without explanation, the force of this concept is generally lost upon our very different culture. What did kinship mean, how was it that Israel could claim God as a kinsman, and what did that relationship entail?

Kinship was the fundamental structure governing societal interaction and functionality, and kin had particular duties to each other within that structure, including mutual love, loyalty, and support (Lev. 19:17–18); avenging wrongful death (Num. 35:6–34);<sup>46</sup> and, notably, for

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(2013): 109–27; and Brian W. Ricks, “James E. Talmage and the Doctrine of the Godhead,” *Religious Educator* 13, no. 2 (2012): 185–209. Compare Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

42. This is neither a scriptural phrase nor found among Joseph Smith’s teachings. See Corbin Volluz, “Jesus Christ as Elder Brother,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 141–58. Volluz traces the earliest identification of Jesus as “our Brother” to Orson Pratt in 1844.

43. The typical translation of ‘*am* as “people” represents the endpoint of a three-stage process of semantic broadening. It first meant “paternal uncle” (and still does in modern Arabic) > “kin/kinsman” > “people.”

44. Certainly part of the problem was my erroneous and presentist assumption that there were few differences between Israelite and LDS doctrinal thought.

45. Outside of Israel, these and other terms such as “father-in-law” and “mother” were used to similar ends. Had I encountered something like *hami’el*, “God is my father-in-law,” I might have figured out sooner that my narrow paradigm was not properly calibrated.

46. Note that this is not revenge. The concept of *eye for an eye* served to set an upper limit on justice and prevent escalation. If you accidentally killed my cow, I could not escalate and kill your child in response. Furthermore, Numbers 35 distinguishes between accidental killing (or involuntary manslaughter) and murder. In the first case, the culprit could appeal to the community, which

present purposes, in buying back (that is, redeeming) family land that had been sold due to poverty (Lev. 25:25–34) or family members who had been sold into slavery (Lev. 25:47–50). The Levirate law of marrying a brother's childless widow to raise children in his name may also have been a duty of kinship.<sup>47</sup>

The advantages and duties of biological kinship described above could be extended to those outside the tribe, clan, or family through covenant, which included legal and ethical aspects, cultic aspects, and juridical aspects. “The covenant bears all these aspects because it is an extension of familial relationship, and the extended family, the *bet 'ab* [or ‘father’s house’], was the central framework for the legal, religious, and political aspects of ancient Semitic society.”<sup>48</sup> Since kinship-through-covenant extended familial relationships, the respective kinship terms that we think of as strictly biological took on broader meaning. “The interaction between kinship and covenant creates differences between the meanings of terms like ‘father,’ ‘mother,’ ‘son,’ ‘daughter,’ ‘brother,’ ‘sister,’ ‘uncle,’ or ‘nephew’ in the Bible, and the way we use these titles in everyday speech. In the Bible, their connotations are often more legal than biological. They identify a variety of people besides blood relatives.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, they often identify people who are kin through covenant.

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rendered judgment on culpability, and temporarily retreat to a city of refuge for safety; in the second case, the murderer was put to death by the kinsman upon the evidence of witnesses.

47. This is not explicit in extant Israelite law but is implied in the book of Ruth, which thoroughly integrates themes of redemption. Indeed, “the subject of redemption is more prominent in Ruth than in any other biblical book. . . . Boaz announces his marriage to Ruth. Such an extension of the notion of redemption to include marriage exceeds expectations and provides utmost security for an otherwise marginalized person, by integrating her fully into the household in the most respectable fashion. Although marriage is not elsewhere demanded in the Bible in conjunction with redemption, marriage as a metaphor for God’s redemptive actions on Israel’s behalf is integral to some prophetic writings, expressed, for example, in Isa. 54:5, where God is husband and redeemer.” Tamara Cohen Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kremsky, *The JPS Bible Commentary—Ruth* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2011), liv–lv. Compare the language of Ruth 4:10 with Deut. 25:6.

48. Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to a Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 3.

49. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel, 1250–587 BCE* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 8.

Frank Moore Cross broke new ground on this long-studied topic. “Often it has been asserted that the language of ‘brotherhood’ and ‘fatherhood,’ ‘love,’ and ‘loyalty’ is ‘covenant terminology.’ This is to turn things upside down. *The language of covenant, kinship-in-law, is taken from the language of kinship, kinship-in-flesh.*”<sup>50</sup> Through covenant, those Outside could be brought Inside, as if they were and had been family all along, with all the blessings and duties implied.

Along with their eastern neighbors the Amorites and the Moabites,<sup>51</sup> Israelites held that covenant could extend the bonds of kinship not just to biologically unrelated humans but also to deity. Although he had already graciously acted as de facto kinsman in freeing Israel from slavery in Egypt (Ex. 6:6), Yahweh formally becomes Israel’s divine kinsman through covenant in Exodus 24.<sup>52</sup> Various metaphors express this relationship throughout the Old Testament, including the marriage<sup>53</sup>

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50. Frank Moore Cross, “Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel,” in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 11; italics added. Hershel Shanks provides an accessible summary and discussion of Cross in “God as Divine Kinsman: What Covenant Meant in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25 (July/August 1999): 32–33, 60.

51. Cross, “Kinship and Covenant,” 12.

52. The simile-curse aspects of the covenant-ratification ritual in Exodus 24 have long been noted. The throats of animals were cut, the blood collected (called “the blood of the covenant”), and half splashed on the altar and half on the people who had just agreed to the covenant. This was a “symbolic action in which the people were identified with the sacrificed animal, so that the fate of the latter is presented as the fate to be expected by the people if they violated their sacred promise (i.e., it is a form of self-curse). Thus the ratification ceremony was, in effect, the pledging of their lives as a guarantee of obedience to the divine will.” David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 1:1185 s.v. “Covenant.” Scott Hahn connects this with kinship: “The sprinkling of blood is a ritualized oath-curse—in technical terminology, a *Drohitus*. The sprinkled blood of the slain animals represents the curse of death that both parties invoke upon themselves should they prove unfaithful to their covenantal obligations. The mutual sprinkling of blood may also convey the idea that both parties now share one blood—that is, they have become kin.” Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 47.

53. Marriage was covenant-based and established kinship. Cross thinks the statement in Gen 2:24 (“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”) “is not a reference to sex, as many assume, but an assertion of the new kinship relationship between husband and wife.” See his response to a letter, under “Queries & Comments—Potpourri,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 25, no. 6 (1999): 67.



metaphor familiar from the prophets as well as Israel being God's "son" or the "kin of Yahweh" (Heb. *'am yahweh*, traditionally "people of Yahweh").

Regardless of the familial metaphor chosen in any given passage (and there can be many), it is the duty implied by the kinship metaphor that is important. Cross elaborates: "The Divine Kinsman, it is assumed, fulfilled the mutual obligations and receives the privileges of kinship. He leads in battle, redeems from slavery, loves his family, shares the land of his heritage, provides and protects. He blesses those who bless his kindred, curses those who curse his kindred. The family of the deity rallies to his call to holy war, 'the wars of Yahweh,' keeps his cultus, obeys his patriarchal commands, maintains familial loyalty, loves him with all their soul, calls on his name."<sup>54</sup>

Israelites and their neighbors may have viewed this covenantal kinship as the primary relationship by which they approached deity. When in need of help, they called on God and expected him to respond because they were kin. "Since Israel is God's near kinsman, when Israel is in distress it is God's veritable obligation to come to its aid and make whatever efforts are necessary in order to extricate it from its predicament."<sup>55</sup> As a relatively small and weak nation, Israel's collective problems were often political or martial. God as Israel's divine kinsman implied not only eventual redemption from slavery or oppression but also divine violence on their behalf.

To summarize the relevant points, the duty of a kinsman, whether human or divine, kin-by-flesh or kin-by-law, included redeeming or buying back family land and family members who had fallen into trouble. One word—*ga'al*—and its derivatives appear repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, which "primarily represent technical legal terminology of Israelite family law."<sup>56</sup> Hebrew *ga'al* may well mean something like "to act as kinsman" or "to carry out the duty of a kinsman," though it will never appear that way in translation. Because English lacks a parallel term, translation varies based on the context of the situation and which duty is being carried out. When *ga'al* appears without such context, its various forms are simply translated as "redeem" or "redeemer." To indicate some of the cultural background, a few translations have opted for the neologism of "kinsman-redeemer" or "redeeming-kinsman." Thus,

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54. Cross, "Kinship and Covenant," 7.

55. Berlin and Brettler, *Jewish Study Bible*, 271, note to Leviticus 25:24.

56. See *NIDOTTE*, s.v. "[*ga'al*]," 1:789–94.

to claim God as “redeemer,” or to call upon him for redemption, was to claim kinship through a covenant relationship with him.<sup>57</sup>

## BROADER LDS IMPLICATIONS

### How Much Did Book of Mormon Culture Retain These Israelite Conceptions?

Because of its emphasis on the plan of redemption and salvation, the Book of Mormon presents several interesting variants of these interpretive problems.

First, given the complex authorship issues of the Hebrew Bible, it is difficult to know the prevalence and form of these concepts in the immediate environment of the two Israelite groups who would form the Israelite substrate of the Book of Mormon—the Nephites and the people of Zarahemla, often today called Mulekites.<sup>58</sup>

Second, regardless of the initial extent of Israelite cultural/linguistic base of the Book of Mormon peoples, once separated from its parent culture, these cultural break-offs would diverge and differentiate themselves over time, to say nothing of potential cultural influence of others

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57. Note, however, that not every unnamed redeemer in the text is divine. The unnamed kinsman whom Boaz consults in Ruth 4:1–2 is one obvious example. More controversial would be the well-known passage enshrined in Handel’s *Messiah*, Job 19:25–26: “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” Michael Austin examines it as part of a larger analysis, concluding that the redeemer in question is a human defender of Job. See chapter 8 of his *Re-reading Job: Understanding the Ancient World’s Greatest Poem* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 103–18.

58. The term “Mulekite” is never used in the Book of Mormon text, and their putative Israelite ancestry is uncritically accepted hundreds of years later by Mormon the editor. Orson Scott Card makes the reasonable argument that this genealogy was a fraudulent claim aimed at retaining kingship, a claim which Mosiah trumped by producing written records. This explains how a much smaller immigrant group on the run peacefully takes over the kingship of an established and much larger group. See Orson Scott Card, “The Book of Mormon—Artifact or Artifice?” in *A Storyteller in Zion: Essays and Speeches* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), available at <http://www.nauvoo.com/library/card-bookofmormon.html>. As for Mormon’s knowledge of this, Elder John A. Widtsoe’s dictum applies. “When inspired writers deal with historical incidents they relate that which they have seen or that which may have been told them, unless indeed the past is opened to them by revelation.” John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1943), 127.

they may have encountered.<sup>59</sup> The strongest moderating force to cultural change would have been written records, but their impact would be largely limited by the low rates of literacy and the rareness of records. In other words, barring unusual circumstances, we should expect any Book of Mormon parallels to the Hebrew Bible to be strongest early after the separation from Jerusalem and weakest after a thousand years of cultural and linguistic change.

Third, the nature of the Book of Mormon text prevents us from making strong language claims. That is, we have no original-language text or any firm idea of the *kind* of translation the English represents, that is, the relationship between the English text and the underlying original.<sup>60</sup> We have a string of translational equivalents that, as pointed out in the introduction, often conceal or distort the underlying text in some way. But such is the nature of translation.

Such factors make it difficult to pin down the meaning of terms in the Book of Mormon. Consequently, the strongest possible examples of these Israelite concepts in the Book of Mormon would necessarily consist of (a) one of the three KJV words under examination, (b) coming early in the Book of Mormon, (c) with contextual clues that point us to the Israelite concept. While many instances can be found and examined with these interpretative concepts in mind, here are a couple of examples tentatively advanced to illustrate the task that lies ahead.

From the outset, the term *Redeemer* was frequently used by Lehi (see, for example, 1 Ne. 10:5, 6, 14; 2 Ne. 1:10; 2:3) and Nephi (see, for example, 1 Ne. 11:27; 15:14; 17:30; 19:18, 23; 22:12), perhaps reflecting the keen sense of loss they had suffered in leaving their nation, people, temple, and lands of inheritance in Israel. Hence, they hoped that the sins of the people in Jerusalem that had led to their destruction could someday be wiped away and their promised lands would someday be recovered.

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59. Beyond the potential “others” in the promised land, S. Kent Brown has argued that at least part of the eight years in the wilderness (1 Ne. 17:4) was spent in bondage or servitude to non-Israelites. See “Sojourn, Dwell, and Stay: Terms of Servitude,” in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 55–74, available online at <https://rsc.byu.edu/out-print/jerusalem-zarahemla-literary-and-historical-studies-book-mormon>.

60. For one extended example of trying to tease out the kind of translation, see Brant Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2011).

Lehi and Nephi used the term *Redeemer* most poignantly when speaking to their own family members. Thus, in 2 Nephi 2:3, Lehi said to his son Jacob, “Wherefore, I know that thou art redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer.” We can read this particular statement in light of the nature of human kinship versus divine kinship. That is, we know from the book of Ruth that while kinsmen had the duty to redeem, human kinsmen did not always carry it out. In Ruth, the unnamed kinsman, closer in line to Naomi than Boaz, chose not to fulfill his duty. Boaz, who may well have tried to influence just this outcome, stepped in as the *go’el* or kinsman-redeemer. In context, then, perhaps we can paraphrase Lehi’s statement as, “because God is your kinsman-redeemer and unlike human kinsman-redeemers who are not always reliable and faithful in carrying out covenantal obligations, God is righteous. Therefore, you, Jacob, are surely redeemed, bought back, repurchased.”

King Benjamin’s speech, occurring at the temple in Zarahelma approximately 460 years after Lehi’s group left Jerusalem, dwells deeply on the doctrines of atonement, salvation, and redemption. Although not using the terms *redeem*, *redeemer*, or *redemption*, Benjamin’s text makes frequent use of the terms *atonement*, *salvation*, *saved*, and *Savior*. Mosiah 3:18 speaks of “salvation” and the “atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent,” terms that appear to draw on the Hebrew meanings of *yasha’*, including (in this coronation setting) the kinds of help and deliverance only the heavenly king can give, and of *kippēr*, including (in this ritual setting) to purge, purify, expiate, or ransom. At the end of Benjamin’s speech, Mosiah 5:7–8 connects this cluster of ideas with a new kinship relationship through covenant making. Benjamin said to all his people—Nephites and Mulekites—that “because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free.” The making of this covenant entails a new relationship—it expresses kinship through the terms *sons* and *daughters*, and this new kinship relationship brings freedom. The fact that we have strong ties to language of the ancient Nephite records (Mosiah 1:2), as well as contextual ceremonial clues, together with the appearance of specific words, strengthens the plausible relevance of the Hebrew meanings in our understanding of the words *atonement* and *salvation* used in

Benjamin's speech. If the phrase under consideration in Mosiah 5:8 had contained the word "redeemed" instead of just "made free," this example would be even stronger, but we must take the text as it reads.

### Modern LDS Applications of These Three Israelite Conceptions

Not being aware of Hebrew linguistics, most Latter-day Saints tend to use "atone," "redeem," and "save" without knowing the broader and distinct Israelite contexts behind these terms. Moreover, LDS discourse tends to use the word *atonement* primarily in eschatological and theological contexts, focused on the obstacles of sin and death. While this should indeed be our ultimate concern, it should not exclude other aspects of atonement that can help our progress toward that goal. Latter-day Saints have also frequently relied on many types of extended metaphors to explain the complexities of the Atonement, often financial and often extrascriptural.<sup>61</sup> While these models are certainly useful, every metaphor or abstraction breaks down or is incomplete and can be misleading at some point. LDS understandings can be enriched through careful use of atonement metaphors, in pastoral care, personal discipleship, and scriptural exegesis. How, then, can the three Israelite concepts from the scriptures introduced above profitably broaden LDS understanding of atonement?

**Atonement.** While Mormonism has neither a system for the expiation of ritual pollution or of defilement of the holy land (as did ancient Israel) nor a yearly ritual in which the temple(s) or land are ritually cleansed (as would correspond to the priestly notion of atonement), one can well imagine some Mormons drawing on the Hebrew concept to include cleansing the land, taking "pollution" as concrete instead of ritual, thus making an environmental application. BYU Professor George Handley's book *Home Waters*, subtitled *A Year of Recompenses on the Provo River*, gestures toward just such an understanding: "Ecological restoration is neither technophilia nor antihumanist escapism. It is repentance, plain and simple."<sup>62</sup>

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61. Extrascriptural metaphors are not inherently contrary to scripture or faulty, but they do tend to impose ideas or frameworks that scripture itself does not warrant, as well as preempt the actual metaphors used in the scriptures themselves.

62. George Handley, *Home Waters: A Year of Recompenses on the Provo River* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), xiii. My thanks to Kristine

Another, more personal, pastoral adaptation is possible. Thinking of atonement in financial or transactional terms has led some Mormons to struggle with perfectionism and an easy conflation of *worthiness* or *worthy* with (*self-*)*worth*, the idea or feeling that a person is loved, valued, or “worth” less because of mistakes, imperfections, and sins. Several productive ways of dealing with this have been suggested in the past, but I wonder if more integration with the idea of ritual rather than just moral pollution might help.

Ritual uncleanness<sup>63</sup> was incurred regularly through a variety of means, including regular biological processes of both men and women as well as sin, and had little necessary bearing on one’s righteousness or standing before God. Some encounters with uncleanness were an unavoidable part of creation and being alive; certainly Jesus himself incurred ritual uncleanness in his life under Jewish law, even deliberately at times,<sup>64</sup> but this fact in no way undermined his sinlessness, divinity, goodness, or self-worth. He would have simply undergone the proper cleansing rituals like everyone else and regained his ritual state of “cleanliness.”

If Mormons or Christians anywhere thought of sin more like ritual pollution, an inevitable circumstance or consequence from which they can be fully cleansed through the proper process, they might less readily spiral downward into despair. Perfectionists who try to maintain a perfectly clean slate at all times are likely to berate themselves, concede defeat, give up, and decide they are simply not celestial material.

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Haglund for this reference. See further E. Calvin Beisner and others, “A Biblical Perspective on Environmental Stewardship,” *Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty*, <http://www.acton.org/public-policy/environmental-stewardship/theology-e/biblical-perspective-environmental-stewardship>.

63. One of my Jewish professors noted that “cleanness” and “uncleanness” carried misleading English implications. One could be spotlessly fresh from a shower but ritually impure or “unclean.” By contrast, the dirtiest, stinkiest Boy Scout recently back from a showerless week in the mountains might be “clean” or ritually pure.

64. “In the context of a society which is concerned with purity and in which contact with the impure carries with it significant consequences, Jesus’ touching of ‘sinful’ people, lepers, corpses, and others who in various ways were understood to be culturally compromised is indeed remarkable and warrants investigation.” Craig A. Evans, “‘Who Touched Me?’ Jesus and the Ritually Impure,” in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration*, ed. Bruce David Chilton (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 360.

Nonperfectionists, by contrast, can realize that such failure was both planned for and inevitable,<sup>65</sup> part of being human in mortality, and will avail themselves of the cleansing power of atonement through Christ Jesus.<sup>66</sup>

**Redemption.** While concepts of divine kinship and kinship-by-covenant certainly resonate with family-focused contemporary Mormons, modern Western European and North American cultures lack the social structures that anciently enabled the theological ramifications of divine kinship. I suspect Israelites encountered kin-based redemptive interactions with some regularity, which rendered those aspects of divine kinship imminent and concrete instead of merely theoretical.

There is a kind of quasi-kinship among Latter-day Saints, however. Evaluating the very nice (albeit temporary) housing my wife and I had found through “the Mormon mafia” (LDS networking), an envious non-LDS acquaintance quipped, “Mormon missionaries ought to be hawking *that* kind of thing door-to-door, instead of the Book of Mormon.” And indeed, Mormon networking provides some advantages similar to Israelite kinship. The formal duties of membership are often summed up with Mosiah 18:8–10, “mourning with those who mourn” and so on, but informally, Latter-day Saints perform the duties of community or even kinship for fellow Saints whom they know only remotely, if at all.

We no longer have legal institutions like debt-slavery or levirate marriage as the Israelites did, but fundamentally both LDS and Israelite ideas of kinship and mutual responsibilities are concerned with relationships. On such a basic level, we can perhaps apply some of God-as-divine-kinsman to our ideas of atonement. If our relationship with God is not characterized primarily as debtor-creditor, but as kinsman-kinsman (whether kin by covenant or kin by nature),<sup>67</sup> then perhaps

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65. I do not suggest “inevitable” in a Calvinist way, but in the sense that as we are all human and fallen, all will sin at some point to a greater or lesser extent (Rom. 3:23).

66. While I cannot find my source, I recall one suggestion that we should conceive of sin as a *feature* of mortal existence, not a bug. A world in which sin was impossible would simply not function as an environment for learning, growth, and becoming like God.

67. Most Latter-day Saints, I suspect, would argue that we are already kin with God, in a sense other than the Israelites thought of it. At the same time, they feel strongly their indebtedness to God and recognize their inability to repay that debt even by giving God everything their whole soul might possess.

we can do as the Israelites and call on him for help *in terms* of that relationship. That is, thinking of God as a family member we turn to for help instead of as a banker concerned primarily with having his debt repaid means that we are more likely to seek that help. Thus, Hebrews 4:15–16 recasts how we approach God on the basis of how we conceive of him: “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (NRSV).

The redemptive duties of kinship have a fairly direct application to temple work and family history. LDS theology typically holds that the spirit world is bifurcated. While relatively little is understood or known about this with any certainty, the reception of saving ordinances by proxy figures heavily in leaving “spirit prison.” Cast in terms of LDS temple work, we have kin in “prison” whom we have a duty to redeem and free through genealogy and performance of their temple work.

**Salvation.** On the one hand, the generic usage of *yasha*’ as “save, help” does not have much to add to LDS conceptions, and its frequent specific martial context makes it the most difficult of these three terms to apply to an LDS setting. The challenge lies in a stark cultural and moral difference between modern Western culture and the world of the Old Testament, namely, that we have become much more uncomfortable with (divine?) violence than they appear to have been. This martial usage of “save” depends on and elevates the aspect of God as “divine warrior” and “a man of war” (Ex. 15:3). While the Old Testament is often caricatured as being a locus of violence,<sup>68</sup> this aspect of the ancient world is not limited to the Old Testament but is found in the New Testament in the apocalyptic depictions in the book of Revelation, as well as in the Book of Mormon in 3 Nephi 8–10. (In fairness, when Jesus says the two great

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See Mosiah 2:22. Within a family context, the existence and forgiveness of such indebtedness is both natural and understandable.

68. See, for example, Eric A. Seibert, *The Violence of Scripture: Overcoming the Old Testament’s Troubling Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012). A popular treatment is provided by Peter Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), especially ch. 6. On violence and other problems of scripture, see Kenton Sparks, *Sacred Word, Broken Word: Biblical Authority and the Dark Side of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012).



laws are to love God and love your neighbor as yourself, he is quoting straight out of the Law in Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18.)

This depiction of God as engaging in violence, even in order to defend or protect his people from their enemies, nevertheless discomfits many modern readers, particularly as scriptural rhetoric sometimes glories in it. It is difficult to find aspects of divine violence in an atonement by a god who is motivated exclusively by infinite love, complete self-sacrifice, and altruistic concern. This conundrum is well worth puzzling over, and perhaps readers more authoritative or creative than I am can posit a good Christian application of this Hebraic concept of salvation.

## CONCLUSION

The Israelite roots of our modern atonement terminology, which we use synonymously and largely in ignorance of those roots, offer fruitful grounds for reexamining our own teachings and traditions about atonement. How and what we teach about it makes a great deal of difference in how we internalize, understand, and act on it. The explorations here are merely overviews and initial suggestions, but they will, I hope, prove useful “for the edifying” and “perfecting of the saints” (Eph. 4:12).

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T. Benjamin Spackman is a PhD student in History of Christianity and Religion in North America at Claremont Graduate University. He graduated from Brigham Young University with a BA in Near Eastern Studies, then received an MA and did PhD work in Semitics at the University of Chicago. During that time, he taught Institute courses for a decade as a volunteer, as well as the occasional BYU course. He has published with the Maxwell Institute and *Religious Educator*, and writes online at Times and Seasons and Benjamin the Scribe. He anticipates publication of his book, *Reading Scripture, Reading Creation: The Ancient Context of Genesis 1* in late 2016 by the Maxwell Institute. His book feeds into one of his modern-era interests and focus at Claremont, the historical conflict between science, evolution, and interpretation of scripture. He lives in California with his wife, who finished her PhD first and currently teaches at Harvey Mudd College.

## On Fear, Food, and Flight

*Elizabeth Brady*

I'm having trouble eating. This isn't a new development. I've always struggled against the monotony of eating a dish long enough to fill me up. The heel of a sandwich, one last heap of spaghetti, and milky dregs of soup repel me. But every so often this repulsion envelops me, and I can't force myself to eat much for days, sometimes longer. This time around, my revulsion is reborn with a new face: I cannot stomach sweet things.

Saying I have a sweet tooth is a sad understatement. At any moment, I could happily accept a cookie, donut, or other pastry. And I've always had a high tolerance; when my friends deny themselves a second helping, I'm dishing a fourth.

Lately, however, I'm stuck. I can't eat sweets. Yesterday, I was offered a piece of cake, and instead of taking a large center portion, I took a quarter of a serving out of politeness, coaxing myself through bird-like mouthfuls. Most people would probably see this as a good thing: instead of spreading lima beans around my plate to make it appear as if I've eaten most of the helping, I'm pushing bits of chocolate cake to the corners of a party plate.

I don't feel at all myself.



Crohn's disease is a major culprit in my tempestuous relationships with food. An autoimmune disorder of the digestive system, Crohn's has often come between me and my desires for food—both with these bouts of general nausea and with precise intolerances. After eight years with

the diagnosis and twelve years with symptoms, I am aware of the jealous nature of Crohn's disease. One day I enjoy lavish Italian food; the next week I'll eat marinara sauce and curse the unrelenting acid reflux. I stay away from milk and ice cream, but cheese and Yoplait yogurt are permissible. I really shouldn't eat sugar on an empty stomach, but if I first eat chicken and vegetables, my stomach will tolerate impressive helpings of dessert.

Generally, though, my stomach is relatively stable if I follow my self-taught tricks. But there is one wild card in all of this: stress. My symptoms are highly correlated with my stress levels—which are often hard for me to detect. When I am stressed, I hold it in my body: my shoulders knot, my jaw tenses, and my stomach revolts with its varied arsenal. During the majority of this process, I don't *think* I'm stressed, but my body knows better.

Only this year, I decided to be proactive: I've turned to yoga to help maintain balance and prevent a stress overdose. Over the summer I completed an intensive yoga training course at a local studio. For six weeks, five hours per day, five days each week, I practiced yoga, learned about yoga, talked about yoga. I figured, as a stress-reducing exercise with a focus on connecting mind, body, and spirit, yoga would help keep my stress in check and thus reduce the symptoms of my Crohn's disease, preventing major flare-ups and allowing more flexibility in my life.



From the beginning, James and I were a natural fit. On our first date, we ate Thai food, the conversation easy, pleasing. His smile was shy but frequent, and he laughed like children do: loud, long, and infectious. Joyous and far-reaching, it seeped into my chest, warm and rich as caramel. We stayed at our table in the back until after the restaurant had closed, only then noticing the weary and pointed looks of the last waitress, who had by then cleared all the other tables. This was just before Christmas, the finals week of a particularly hellish semester for me, and I was leaving for home in three days. We walked outside. James helped me with my coat and snow fell quietly, white glitter in our hair and lashes. He handed me the tall box of my leftover pad Thai. Would you maybe have time to see me again before you leave? he asked. Yes, absolutely. Of course.



For two weeks, I have experienced a state of near-constant nausea. Sweets are especially offensive, but most foods are now nearly inedible.

Eating a hearty meal of protein and vegetables normally tamps down the nausea, but I'm too far into the cycle: in order to appease the nausea, I need to eat. But when I do eat, or even feel like eating, the nausea becomes urgent. I don't eat; I'm nauseated. I'm nauseated; I don't eat.



If I were the kind of person who believed in love at first sight, or even the destiny of two people belonging together, I would say that about James and me. After that first date, being together felt like a given. We quickly fell into each other's lives, every night a movie night, every evening together. We talked about everything, sitting side by side at our favorite restaurants, or cooking elaborate meals together. He was better with vegetables; I was better with main dishes. Friends and even acquaintances commented on how we have the same smile, the same eyes. Same glasses and hair. We fit.

Everything sounds so meant to be, so sickeningly cute, so trite, cliché. And it is. But it was new to us. And we were never afraid, didn't think it would ever be any different, not really.



The weightlessness of inversions and the ability to stand without feet earned inversions the term *flight*. One blogger for *Yoga Journal* describes the unique practice this way: "Inversions set yoga apart from other physical disciplines: Psychologically, they allow us to see things from an alternate perspective. Emotionally, they guide the energy of the pelvis (the energy of creation and personal power) toward the heart center, enabling self-exploration and inner growth. Physically, they stimulate the immune and endocrine systems, thereby invigorating and nourishing the brain and the organs. When done correctly, inversions also release tension in the neck and the spine."<sup>1</sup>

In Ashtanga yoga, inversions are performed near the end of every practice. And so I discovered my inability to fly. Every day during practice I got myself in position, focused on applying the correct principles of preparation, and attempted to go upside-down. I kicked a leg up again and again, and wore myself out. Sometimes in desperation I overkicked, propelling the weight of my body too far over my shaking

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1. Aadil Palkhivala, "Do You Have a Royal Fear of Inversions?" *Yoga Journal*, August 28, 2007, <http://www.yogajournal.com/article/beginners/strike-a-royal-pose/>.

arms. I fell often. One arm would give out and I'd fall to the side, or I fell back toward the mat if I didn't kick up hard enough. Day after day I sat back on my heels, red-faced after a handful of failed attempts, and watched the other students balance steadily on their hands or forearms. They looked serene. Long and vulnerable as carrots about to be pulled, as grounded as willows.



Over the same summer that I tried to fly in yoga, James drifted with depression. He told me he had always struggled with the illness; it came and went, and he never took any medicine for it, sure he could work through it on his own. I knew he was going through a particularly rough patch, and it was hard for us both. We felt a new hesitancy, a little bit of distance, and a lot of desperation, fear. We ordered more take-out, and dinners were quieter. We used to interrupt each other in our excitement to talk, his laughter peeling often; now we asked each other, What are you thinking? But the answer was usually nothing. Even in this, I couldn't guess what would come next. An end. A fall. This time, with nothing to catch me.



No one understood why I couldn't stick an inversion. I am naturally strong, relatively, and didn't shy away from trying. It's common for beginners to feel afraid of flying; it's very unnerving to be upside-down, and that makes it feel unsafe or frightening. I mentally surveyed the common points of resistance, wondering if I could find my hang-up. Am I afraid I'm too weak, that my arms aren't strong enough to support my body? No, my arms are uncharacteristically strong for a girl, and my body weighs only 100 pounds. Do I experience any pain? Not when I focus on correct form. Am I afraid I'll fall? Maybe. But that also doesn't seem likely because I am not really afraid of pain—I've always played sports and sustained plenty of injuries, none of which made me afraid to play or afraid to get hurt.

I was stumped. My instructor offered help every way she knew how, including strategies to fall in a safe way. She said, "Most people who are afraid of flight just don't know how to catch themselves if they fall." She taught me how to adjust my hands if I feel my feet falling over my head: simply walk one hand to a 45-degree angle from the other. This will turn the body and allow a foot to swing down safely. I mastered the technique in minutes. Perhaps I wasn't afraid of the fall after all.



I trick myself into eating. I distract myself with reading, eat as I'm walking somewhere, eat only my favorites, try not to eat alone or it likely devolves into attempts more than success. I have conversations with myself about the food I'm trying to eat. Just take one more bite. You're doing well! You need to have something in your stomach. This is the only way you'll feel better. And this is precisely when it hits me I'm eating, and I'm overwhelmed with the foodiness. I can smell nothing but its potency. The taste amplifies and ricochets in the cavern of my mouth until it feels as though the food were there when it is not. I force another bite. Sounds fade until I can only hear eating: my teeth and cheeks struggling to corral the mouthful, but saliva has fled and I cannot adequately moisten it, so the bite lolls around in my mouth like a mound of dough rolling with a hook. My ears ring. Nausea rushes me, and I have to stand or sit very still until I can lie down. I have too many simultaneous needs: get away from the food; don't move; rinse my mouth; don't move; throw up; keep it down or it's all for nothing. My right hand claps my mouth, left hand nestles into the space just below my right clavicle. This is the feeling of comfort to me. I don't hold my stomach. The sensation is too much.



I couldn't believe what James was telling me; it didn't seem real. He left after the break-up conversation, but I didn't really believe that was it. We had always been so sure. Always. I went to his house the next day, but his eyes were empty, and he didn't smile, hardly wanted to talk. I went to see him the next week, but nothing had changed. I rejected the idea of an ending, finality, and my body rejected food.

Most people think the moments or hours before falling asleep, alone, after a break-up are the worst. Not for me. It was the mornings. I'd wake up, after escaping my life for a few hours in sleep, foggy and forgetful, then awareness would rush at me in waves. Morning after morning, memory after memory, waves.



Nausea is typically described as waves. I think of the beach, the crashing waves, the pull of the undertow, the fact that waves never stop. Crash and pull. Crash. Pull. Just as you've regained footing from the last wave, the water pulls back sharply and thrashes your thighs with another. On and on.

That, to me, is the aptness of this metaphor: I can't think of a waveless beach. Even when only a little lapping is present, the waves are there, ready to rear back and pound the shore, with no end in sight. Nausea, however, typically has an end in sight: expulsion. Relief. Progress. In my case, that's rarely true. Instead, I constantly battle nausea with no guarantee of relief. I feel the fear of throwing up without the satisfaction of fulfillment.



I've tried every trick to get myself upside-down. And when I'm not physically practicing, I search for answers in words. While searching *Yoga Journal* for something I'd maybe missed, I found Linda Sparrowe's article on conquering the fear of flight. She says, "Handstand, like all balancing poses, requires that you feel comfortable with instability. When faced with instability of any kind—physical or mental—most of us tend to recoil immediately and try to regain control by locking things tightly in place. Ironically, this reaction only serves to make us more rigid and less able to make minute and sensitive adjustments to bring ourselves back into balance."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps here, finally, I've found my problem: the thought of my body inverted, standing upside-down in a wide room, reminds me of pill bugs I found in my garden as a girl. I coaxed them into my palm, their translucent legs tickling across my skin. And then I flipped them over. For a split second I could see their soft gray underbelly, legs flailing, trying to regain control: vulnerable and bare. In a blink, they rolled together, the hard armor of their back protecting their weakness, recoiling against instability. They took too long to unfurl their bodies in my hands, and I lost interest; they didn't trust me.



James and I had planned on getting married. We had picked a ring. It had seemed so sure.

Now that future is flying.



*Flight* typically has a positive connotation. Freedom unfettered. Lightness, weightlessness, soaring to the heavens. Angels.

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2. Linda Sparrowe, "Standing on Your Own Two Hands," *Yoga Journal* (May/June 2003): 110.

I can see the appeal of these notions. I would also love to feel those heights of jubilation, exultation. But when I think of that kind of freedom, my first thought is water—not flying, but floating. I am fascinated with swimming things; otters over eagles. When I want to feel weightless, I take a bath.

Maybe this started in my dreams. I have a recurring dream of flight. Always, I am back in my hometown, on the small country lane in Idaho where I spent most of my childhood. As I walk down the lane, I find a broomstick, and I know it can make me fly. So I straddle it, and take off. I soar high, feel the catch in my chest as I lift. And I'm very good at flying: I barrel-roll, I dive, I speed through trees. But always, a storm kicks up. The sky darkens, and I realize I'm alone, in trouble. I have to get to the ground, but the wind whips and whistles and rain stings my cheeks. I'm no longer in control of the broom—the storm has taken over. I roll through the skies with the gray clouds in utter terror. Eventually, I fall, grounded again. I abandon the broom and run home. When the storm breaks, I look outside for the broom, but I never find it, and I know I'll never fly again.



James had broken the relationship, but to me it felt more suspended. It seemed so clear to me that he wasn't free to think clearly; depression had been slowly stealing his rational thinking, his personality. Over those summer months his mood and motivations dampened, gradually growing heavy, weighted. He believed he would never make me happy; he believed he had to leave.

I didn't think so. And I didn't think leaving him on his own while he was struggling was a good option either. I asked him to try an antidepressant. I thought it would help him float back to the surface, feel more himself, feel free.



When most people think about a fear of flying, they might think of planes, mechanics. My fear of flight is personal. It resides in my body, the way Crohn's does; a disease. And I wonder if perhaps James isn't experiencing these same sensations: With Crohn's, my stomach pitches with nausea, and I reject food; with depression, James's thoughts roil with doubts, serotonin flees, and he rejects people, love. I tried to make it through a meal one mouthful at a time, and James tried to walk toward the future one day at a time. Only when we stepped back to look at our actions



from a new height could we see a gaping endlessness, an overwhelming repetition of requirements just to get through a small portion. If I have to fight so hard to take this many bites just to finish one meal, how can I ever sustain this? And how can James keep walking toward a future if he can't even get out of bed today? Each of us felt the vertigo of fear.

Fear not just of flight, but of the unknown.



At the end of each practice, we lie in Savasana. I lie on my mat, only small points of my body in contact with the ground: heels, calves, pelvis, shoulders, head, arms. I close my eyes and the other students disappear, my mat cradling my body. Sounds fade until I can hear only the soft rush of my heartbeats in my ears. I drift deeper into the pose, surrendering to the mat, sinking. My mind floats away from my body. It feels unfettered, delicious. It feels like flying.



Maybe two weeks after we broke up, James came to my house. He had just started an antidepressant, was feeling hopeful. And was feeling glad I hadn't fled when flight would have been easy. His shy smile garnished his bare, grateful expression. I rested my head on his shoulder, and he reached out a hand, rested it on my clavicle. I immediately felt secure, warm, protected. This feels safe, I told him. I felt his arm relax, he leaned into me a little deeper. It felt like grounding.

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This essay by Elizabeth Brady received an honorable mention in the BYU Studies 2015 personal essay contest.

# Seer Stones, Salamanders, and Early Mormon “Folk Magic” in the Light of Folklore Studies and Bible Scholarship

*Eric A. Eliason*

The 2015 publication of an *Ensign* article<sup>1</sup> on, and especially photos of, one of Joseph Smith’s seer stones still owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints caused quite a sensation in the blogosphere. Many responses focused on the “weirdness” of the stone and its use, the ostensibly alien nature of this odd relic from the past, so out of place in modern religion, and posited it as a troubling problem in need of explanation.<sup>2</sup> Mormon studies as a discipline has struggled to make sense of seer stones too. These responses are understandable, considering how often communities tend to presume little change in ritual practice over time and how identity groups tend to see others’ actually quite similar practices—separated by time or culture—as superstitious and our own as pious and commonsensical. Patrick Mason reminds us, “When we

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1. See Richard E. Turley Jr., Robin S. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Joseph the Seer,” *Ensign* 45 (October 2015): 48–54.

2. Steve Fleming, “‘If Any of You Lack Wisdom’: Seer Stones and John Dee’s and Joseph Smith’s Religious Quests,” *Juvenile Instructor*, August 9, 2015, <http://juvenileinstructor.org/if-any-of-you-lack-wisdom-seer-stones-and-john-dees-and-joseph-smiths-religious-quests/>; Kevin Barney, “Coming to Terms with Folk Magic in Mormon History,” *By Common Consent*, August 9, 2015, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2015/08/09/coming-to-terms-with-folk-magic-in-mormon-history/>; Dan Peterson, “On Early Mormonism and the ‘Magic’ World View,” *Patheos*, August 11, 2015, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/danpeterson/2015/08/on-early-mormonism-and-the-magic-world-view.html>; jettboy, “The Stone in a Hat and the Miracle of Translation,” *Millennial Star*, August 15, 2015, <http://www.millennialstar.org/the-stone-in-a-hat-and-the-miracle-of-translation/>.

step out of [a] time machine [into the past], it is we, not the people whom we encounter, who are out of place. Disoriented though we may be, our first responsibility is to get to know them on their own terms.”<sup>3</sup>

Such considerations (and the topic of folk magic itself) are specialties of the field of folklore studies. Bible scholars have sought to make sense of seemingly magical practices in the ancient Near East using insights from folklore scholarship. Their example might be instructive for Mormon studies. This essay hopes to bring to bear the insights of both folklore scholarship and folklore-informed ancient Near Eastern scholarship on the issue of early Mormon seer stones in particular and American frontier folk magic in general. Folklore seems to be the field most relevant to addressing this issue. It is the discipline in which Mormons have figured more prominently as subject matter and practitioners than in any other field.<sup>4</sup> And as a social science rooted in ethnographic methods, folklore studies seeks to make the strange seem sensible.

However, to the broader academic world, the connection between Mormonism and folklore often has had little to do with what professional folklorists actually study. Oral narrative genres like Three Nephite, J. Golden Kimball, and personal revelation stories,<sup>5</sup> as well as contemporary courtship customs, Utah-era vernacular architectural types, and religious healing rites,<sup>6</sup> are not what most scholars outside of folklore

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3. Patrick Q. Mason, *Planted: Belief and Belonging in an Age of Doubt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2015), 90.

4. See, for example, Eric A. Eliason and Tom Mould, eds., *Latter-day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013); and Tom Mould and Eric A. Eliason, “The State of Mormon Folklore Studies,” *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 29–51.

5. William A. Wilson, “Freeways, Parking Lots, and Ice Cream Stands: The Three Nephites in Contemporary Society,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21, no. 3 (1988): 13–26; Eric A. Eliason, *The J. Golden Kimball Stories* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Tom Mould, *Still, the Small Voice: Narrative, Personal Revelation, and the Mormon Folk Tradition* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2011).

6. Kristi A. Young, “Now That I’ve Kissed the Ground You Walk On: A Look at Gender in Creative Date Invitations,” *Marriage and Families* (Winter 2005): 10–17; George H. Schoemaker, “Made in Heaven: Marriage Confirmation Narratives among Mormons,” *Northwest Folklore* 7, no. 2 (1989): 38–53; Thomas Carter, *Building Zion: Folk Architecture in the Mormon Settlements of Utah’s Sanpete Valley, 1849–1890* (PhD diss., Indiana University—Bloomington, 1984); Margaret K. Brady, *Mormon Healer, Folk Poet: Mary Susannah Fowler’s Life of*

imagine when they think of Mormonism and folklore together. Historians inside and outside Mormonism have long used "folk" as a synonym for "superstitious" or "bogus" relative to more respectable theological beliefs and accurate historical understandings; some still do.<sup>7</sup> "Folk" and "folklore," carrying negative connotations with them, have been commonly used when examining the relationship between "frontier folk magic" or "the magic world view" and the origins of Mormonism.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, professional folklorists define folklore not by its respectability or truth value but by its means of transmission—face-to-face, intimate, and sometimes unofficial within small groups. As cultural art and knowledge pass on traditionally, folklore often encompasses the aspects of people's lives they see as most valuable, sacred, and true. "Just because it is folklore does not mean it is not true" is the mantra I try to teach my students.<sup>9</sup> Especially in the realm of botany, spiritual encounters, medicine, and environmental stewardship, traditional ways have

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"*Unselfish Usefulness*" (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000); Jonathan Stapley and Kristine Wright, "'They Shall Be Made Whole': A History of Baptism for Health," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 4 (2008): 69–112.

7. William Hartley, "Mormons, Crickets, and Gulls: A New Look at an Old Story," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1970): 224–39. This trend seems particularly pronounced in referring to pre-1978 General Authority statements on race such as found in Margaret Blair Young and Darius Aidan Gray, "Mormons and Race," in *The Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, ed. Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 363–85.

8. See D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and The Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987); Stephen D. Ricks and Daniel C. Peterson, "The Mormon Magus: *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* by D. Michael Quinn," *Sunstone* 12 (January 1988): 38–39; William J. Hamblin, "That Old Black Magic," *FARMS Review of Books* 12, no. 2 (2000): 225–393. With essays by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald W. Walker, Marvin S. Hill, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, *BYU Studies* published a special issue on early Mormon folk magic in response to new documents produced by Mark Hofmann that highlighted this practice. The essays scrambled to make sense of Hofmann's capture for murder, which happened as the essays were being written, and the implications of this for the reliability of his documents. *BYU Studies* 24, no. 4 (1984).

9. This definition accords with academic folklore textbooks from the 1970s and 1980s. But the field was little consulted at the time by historians. The two most widely used texts at the time were published in Utah or authored by a University of Utah professor: Elliott Oring, ed., *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986); and Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, 2d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

frequently been validated by scientific inquiry.<sup>10</sup> Early Mormon folkloric practices like seer-stone scrying or water divining tend not to seem as academically or religiously controversial to folklorists—especially those familiar with the academic study of biblical and religious folklore—as they might to others.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps this is why LDS folklorists have had relatively little to say about it. But in so doing, we may be in part responsible for letting less useful perceptions about “early Mormon folk magic” linger well into the twenty-first century. This essay seeks to provide a fuller context for understanding this phenomenon by addressing the historical, religious, biblical, and cultural issues involved.

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10. Most dramatic perhaps is ethnobotany’s vast contribution to modern pharmaceuticals from traditionally used medicinal plants. See, for example, Richard Evans Schultes and Siri von Reis, *Ethnobotany: Evolution of a Discipline* (Portland: Timber Press, 1995); and Paul E. Minnis, ed., *Ethnobotany: A Reader* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000). David Hufford’s experience-centered approach has led to discoveries in ethnopsychology showing that some supernatural narrative traditions make better sense of certain actual psychological phenomena than mainstream psychiatry has yet been able to do. See David Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); Barbara Walker, ed., *Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995); and Eric A. Eliason, “Spirit Babies and Divine Embodiment: PBEs, First Vision Accounts, Bible Scholarship, and the Experience-Centered Approach to Mormon Folklore,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2014): 21–28. Useful traditional knowledge about the natural environment has also been much attested: J. T. Inglis, ed., *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1993); Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1999); and V. M. Toledo, “Ethnoecology: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Indigenous Knowledge of Nature,” in *Ethnobiology and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. John R. Stepp and associates (Athens, Ga.: International Society of Ethnobiology, 2002).

11. Alan Dundes, *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999); Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Susan Niditch, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997); Susan Niditch, *A Prelude to Biblical Folklore: Underdogs and Tricksters* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible* (1993; repr., Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004); Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Tucson: Wheatmark, 2008); and Eliason, “Spirit Babies and Divine Embodiment,” 21–28.

## Seer Stones and Book of Mormon Translation

Seer stones are not a peripheral issue to Mormonism's founding. They are central to understanding how the Book of Mormon came to be. Traditional understandings of the Book of Mormon's translation—bolstered by decades of devotional art more focused on general devotional concepts than exact historical representations—had Joseph Smith peering directly at the golden plates, sometimes with the Urim and Thummim found with the plates and described by Joseph as stones set in a bow. Joseph claimed and his followers believe that not by natural means, but by the "gift and power of God," he dictated the book's contents. The general outline of this traditional understanding remains intact in orthodox Mormon circles. However, based largely on later accounts by family members and friends, Joseph is now understood to have done most of his translating away from the plates by looking at a seer stone or one of two stones from the Urim and Thummim in the bottom of his hat, which he used to block out external light, presumably so he could see better the divine light coming from letters appearing on his stone.<sup>12</sup> Scholars and Mormon history buffs have known of these accounts for a long time. We may be living in the moment where these understandings become common knowledge in the Church generally.

The historical record seems to suggest that this shift in understanding from a seer stone to the Urim and Thummim of popular Mormon history happened very early on, in Joseph Smith's own lifetime, close to the events described. Multiple documents written by a variety of contemporaries attest to Joseph Smith having both seer stones, which he found in a number of places, and a Urim and Thummim that he found with the golden plates. The oldest, most numerous, and most reliable extant sources point to Joseph translating with a seer stone in the hat. But how did this seer stone/Urim and Thummim confusion come about and how did it happen so early on? The answer is very much one of folk Mormon biblical reception and may not be confusion at all but a case

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12. Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, "Firsthand Witness Accounts of the Translation Process," in *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, ed. Dennis L. Largey and others (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 65–71; Turley, Jensen, and Ashurst-McGee, "Joseph the Seer," 51; Royal Skousen, "Translating and Printing the Book of Mormon," in *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness*, ed. John W. Welch and Larry E. Morris (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2006), 75–79.

of applying a biblical term to a similar early American folk religious practice.

In frontier America, seer stones or “peep stones” were commonly used by lost object finders, people engaged in the widespread practice of lost treasure digging, and sometimes by people seeking to uncover the kind of truths we might call a private or police detective for today. It is unclear how much of this kind of activity Joseph Smith was involved in, except for water divining and treasure digging, which are widely attested. The “seer” in seer stone is a biblically literate early American culture’s reference to the biblical term *seer* explained in 1 Samuel 9:9 as an earlier term for a prophet—more specifically one who saw visions, dreams, or scenes in the mind’s eye, or even with the natural eyes. Moreover, God gives the seer insight into the meaning of his or her visions (2 Sam. 24:11; 2 Chr. 9:29; Jer. 1:11–18). All of this fits quite nicely with how Joseph Smith saw himself.

To Bible scholars, the Urim and Thummim is one of several items similar to the *ephod* and *lots* used to determine the will of God or seek information from him. (The Liahona in the Book of Mormon follows this pattern.) It seems that early Mormons began to use the terms *seer stone* and *Urim and Thummim* interchangeably, with the latter convention winning the day. But both terms emerge from biblical practices and understandings.

### Poisoning the Well:

#### The Hofmann Episode and American Religious Historical Scholarship

Joseph Smith and his associates’ involvement in practices such as dowsing for water with divining rods and searching for buried treasure with seer stones had long been known to historians, as was the common, but not uncontroversial, nature of such practices in Joseph Smith’s time.<sup>13</sup> In the 1980s, new research suggested a more in-depth and ongoing involvement with “magical” practices than was previously understood—as evidenced perhaps by occult volumes in the Palmyra library and by the Smith family’s possession of a Jupiter talisman, an astrological dagger, and magical parchments.

Apologists argued that propinquity, and even possession, do not automatically imply participation, but other scholars interpreted such

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13. Mark Ashurst-McGee, “A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet” (master’s thesis, Utah State University, 2000).

evidence to mean that Mormonism's foundation lay more in the world of esotericism and the occult than in the prophetic biblical world the Prophet claimed.<sup>14</sup> This contention was bolstered by the emergence of the infamous "Salamander Letter" produced by document dealer Mark Hofmann and purportedly written by Joseph Smith associate Martin Harris to William W. Phelps describing the results of a treasure-hunting trip. This document provided a different account than the canonized version of the angel Moroni giving Joseph Smith the golden plates. "I take Joseph aside & he says it is true . . . the next morning the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole & struck me 3 times & held the treasure & would not let me have it . . . the spirit says I tricked you again."<sup>15</sup>

When newspaper cartoons depicted the salamander as a small newt-like amphibian, Mormons understandably found the letter unsettling. But if the salamander would have been understood as one of the quite distinct beings of the same name in European lore that, like angels, dwell unburnt amid elemental fire, the letter might have seemed a little less troubling. However, the Salamander Letter and several other newfound documents difficult to square with traditional historical understandings proved to be Hofmann forgeries. (In retrospect, perhaps the fact the letter had a salamander, or fire elemental—rather than the traditional gnomes, or earth elementals—guarding a buried treasure should have raised some eyebrows.) As Hofmann's promises to deliver buyers' documents outpaced his ability to create them, he began trying to murder people he feared would expose him. One of his package bombs killed a document collector, and another diversionary bomb intended for a collector's business partner instead killed the partner's wife. In a third explosion, the forger injured only himself and thereby drew enough suspicion for authorities to arrest him. In his plea-bargained testimony, he described himself as a practicing Mormon but longtime closet atheist who set out to profit personally by undermining traditional LDS historical understandings. Hofmann is internationally regarded by the

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14. The primary vector for the "folk magic roots of early Mormonism" trope entering American religious historians' consciousness has most likely been Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), which drew heavily from D. Michael Quinn. Butler also credited Mormon historians with fleshing out a forgotten nineteenth-century world that most Americans participated in, not just Mormons.

15. Quoted in Dean C. Jessee, "New Documents and Mormon Beginnings," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 4 (1984): 403.



professionals he fooled as one of the most masterful forgers of all time. He is currently serving a life sentence in the Utah State Prison.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to him, many historical documents without a verifiable pre-1970s provenance are still suspect. Hofmann and sensationalistic reporting about him compounded the idea that folk magic is somehow scandalous, dangerous, and in some unsavory ways related to Mormon origins. The notion that the LDS Church tried to cover up its true history as discovered by Hofmann still widely persists in popular imagination despite Hofmann's exposure as a forger and the Church's invitations to the press as events unfolded to examine their newly acquired documents.

At the time, most scholars writing about early Mormon folk magic were historians of the American West or American religious history. The only folklorist to weigh in being William A. Wilson and only with two book reviews of historian D. Michael Quinn's *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*—the overreaching yet still seminal work on the topic.<sup>17</sup> Later, a new generation of scholars became more involved.<sup>18</sup> Samuel Brown, trained neither as a folklorist or a historian but as a physician who has intuited insights folklorists would appreciate, has done much to help demystify early Mormon “folk magic.”<sup>19</sup> Folklorist David Allred reminds scholars how folklorists helped de-exoticize the common magic/religion distinction by showing them to be functionally and structurally very similar concepts whose differences have more to do with culturally constructed notions emerging from relationships of group identity, prestige, and power than they do from any intrinsic qualities of magic or religion. For example, one contemporaneous critic of Joseph's involvement in scandalous superstitious doings, and

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16. Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989); Richard E. Turley Jr., *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

17. William A. Wilson, Review of *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* by D. Michael Quinn, *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 96–104; and Review of *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* by D. Michael Quinn, *Western Historical Quarterly* 20 (August 1989): 342–43.

18. David Allred, “Early Mormon ‘Magic’: Insights from Folklore and from Literature,” in Eliason and Mould, *Latter-day Lore: Mormon Folklore Studies*, 184–97; and Mould and Eliason, “The State of Mormon Folklore Studies.”

19. Samuel Morris Brown, *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 69–87; and Samuel M. Brown, “The Reluctant Metaphysicians,” *Mormon Studies Review* 1 (2014): 115–31.

contributor to the first-ever anti-Mormon book,<sup>20</sup> was Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. Hurlbut's given name, "Doctor," had nothing to do with professional training. Rather, he got it from being a seventh son and was therefore thought to have special healing powers. When Hurlbut opposed Joseph Smith, the belief in seventh-son powers was apparently in a different category than seer stone-aided treasure digging—at least in Hurlbut's parents' minds when they named him. Today, however, many might see both practices as two of a kind. For Hurlbut, seer stones were evidence of fraud. David Whitmer, on the other hand, cites Joseph Smith's abandonment of them as evidence of his loss of prophetic gifts and as a major reason for his disaffection from Mormonism.<sup>21</sup>

### Magic's Definition and Persistence

Today's notions of which practices seem magical and which don't can confuse our understanding of the past more than clarify it. Nineteenth-century American aspirants to socially respectable circles might have denigrated glass-looking for lost objects and treasure digging as uneducated superstition. But the same people might have regarded the medicinal balancing of the four humors through blood-letting or timing crop planting by auspicious astrological signs listed in a farmer's almanac as commonsensical and scientific. Joseph himself, as he moved from being a canny country boy to a cultured urbanite, reported giving up treasure seeking as youthful folly unworthy of his religious calling.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in court in 1830 it was testified and judicially accepted that Joseph Smith "had not looked in the glass for two years to find money, &c."<sup>23</sup> Likewise, his mother, long sensitive to slights against her family's poverty and supposed backwardness, revealed in her famous memoir familiarity with magic practices even as she sought to distance her family from them.<sup>24</sup> In this light, Joseph Smith's claims to have left youthful follies

20. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: By the author, 1834).

21. William D. Russell, "Understanding Multiple Mormonisms," in Givens and Barlow, *Oxford Handbook of Mormonism*, 82.

22. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 4 (1984): 489–560.

23. Judge Joel K. Noble's conclusion as reported in 1832 and quoted in Gordon A. Madsen, "Being Acquitted of a 'Disorderly Person' Charge in 1826," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters*, ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo: BYU Studies, 2014), 92.

24. Samuel M. Brown, "Reconsidering Lucy Mack Smith's Folk Magic Confession," *Mormon Historical Studies* 13, nos. 1/2 (2012): 4.

like treasure digging behind is not necessarily inconsistent with his speculated involvement with the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah or the purported possession of a Jupiter talisman at the time of his death.

The presumption that the difference between magic and proper belief is something intrinsic rather than relational to the definer is still very much alive. But on close analysis, complex definitions distinguishing “magical” from “modern” thinking rarely amount to more than “What *you* do is superstition, while what *I* do is science or true religion.” One of the biggest surprises rural students have in American university folklore courses, including at BYU, is discovering their suburban peers need to be taught what divining rods are and how to use them. Today, regardless of class, race, education, wealth, region, or religion, rural students tend to know of holding a forked stick gently in one’s hand to feel for the downward tug that points to underground water and a good spot for a well. Dowsing seems not only understandable, but essential, in rural areas where families are on their own to secure water, and where hired well drillers make no guarantees and charge by the foot. City kids are shocked that their country classmates could be such shameless occult dabblers in a modern age where you don’t have to think about where water comes from. You just turn on the tap and out it comes—like magic. My rural LDS students don’t understand why their suburban counterparts have so little respect for or belief in a common spiritual gift often displayed by their educated and reasonable bishops and stake presidents.

It is simply wrong to assume that divining practices are some long-abandoned exotic aspect of America’s frontier past rather than a continuing worldwide phenomenon, used not only by rural Americans, but by soldiers in Vietnam to find enemy tunnels, by oil and precious metal prospecting companies, and even by contemporary salvage professionals to recover, yes, lost treasure. But none of this means that there are not also bogus scams, such as the well-developed industry of luring American investors to fund “sure fire” efforts to recover caches of loot hidden by Japanese soldiers retreating from the Philippines at the end of World War II.<sup>25</sup> These always seem to need a little more financing and never seem to produce for investors.

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25. Numerous popular books detail how to go about doing this. See for example Aquila Chrysaetos, *General Yamashita’s Dream Book: How to Successfully Find Hidden Treasure in the Philippines* (London: New Generation Publishing, 2013); and Charles C. McDougald, *Asian Loot: Unearthing the Secrets of Marcos, Yamashita, and the Gold* (San Francisco: San Francisco Publishers, 1993).

Some twentieth-century Mormons persisted in using "seers" to find lost items and "water-witches" to decide where to dig wells. Others claimed that divine "manifestations" helped them locate precious things underground.<sup>26</sup> Former bishop John Hyrum Koyle was excommunicated in 1948 for repeated claims—against Church admonition—that he would save the Church from financial ruin with his "Dream Mine" near Spanish Fork, Utah.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, for Jesse Knight, manifestations led him to dig a mine that made him a wealthy man. Considering his find a gift from God, Knight scrupulously treated his workers well, kept his mine closed on Sundays, and really did help save the Church from near financial ruin brought about by its struggle with the federal government over polygamy.<sup>28</sup> While memories of Koyle's audacious claims stir mostly in his local region of southern Utah County, Knight has a building named after him at BYU—though his method for discovering his donated wealth is mostly forgotten. The main difference between Koyle and Knight has little to do with how they decided where to dig, which was similar. Rather, the difference is that Knight's mine actually produced gold (and silver and lead), while Koyle's few remaining stockholders still await that day.<sup>29</sup>

Folklore studies can help dispel notions like the existence of one transcultural and transhistorical "magic world view" that *other* people have that is distinct from the supposed "nonmagic world view" of sophisticated moderns—moderns who are likely to wait an hour after eating to go swimming to prevent drowning from cramps or trust eyewitness testimony to identify criminals in police lineups despite the

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According to mainstream news accounts from another former World War II theater, a German and a Polish treasure seeker have recently found a legendary Nazi train, full of loot and hidden in a tunnel. They have secured an attorney and begun negotiations with the Polish government to be allowed to take possession of a portion of their finding. "Poland Radar Image 'Almost Certainly Nazi Train,'" *BBC News*, August 28, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34090165>; Laura Smith-Spark, "Evidence Supports Claim of Nazi 'Gold Train' Discovery in Poland, Officials Say," *CNN*, August 27, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/27/europe/poland-nazi-train-mystery/>. But this too may prove elusive in the end.

26. Wallace Stegner, *Mormon Country* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1942), 154, 200–201.

27. Kevin Cantera, "A Currency of Faith: Taking Stock in Utah County's Dream Mine," in *Between Pulpit and Pew: The Supernatural World in Mormon History and Folklore*, ed. W. Paul Reeve and Michael Scott Van Wagenen (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2011), 125–58.

28. Stegner, *Mormon Country*, 199–208.

29. Cantera, "Currency of Faith," 125–58.

thorough scientific debunking of each of these contemporary practices.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, when historians talk about early Mormon folkways, their analysis is often clouded by understanding “folklore” to mean “incorrect notions that uninformed people believe” and “folk magic” to mean “superstition or paganism.” Such definitions prevent readers from seeing value in, or making proper sense of, traditional practices Joseph Smith may have participated in.

But how did nineteenth-century folk divinatory practices come to be seen as disturbing and not merely curious? Many American Mormons alive today can remember, or were raised by parents who can remember, the national fascination with the occult in the 1970s and the “Satanic Panic” of the 1980s through the mid-1990s.<sup>31</sup> These events likely shape contemporary Mormons’ view about anything even remotely resembling divinatory practice. For example, Ouija boards were widely viewed as a harmless parlor game for most of the twentieth century, but their implication by some pastors as a vector for demonic possession recast them entirely in the public mind.<sup>32</sup> The 1973 movie *The Exorcist* about a Catholic priest who struggles to cast a devil out of a young girl was a massive cultural phenomenon that, according to Stephen Taysom, even influenced how Latter-day Saints understood their own tradition’s practices.<sup>33</sup>

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30. “Medical Position Statement—MPS 18, Eating before Swimming,” Leuven, Belgium: International Life Saving Federation, 2014; Robert N. Singer and Robert E. Neeves, “Effect of Food Consumption on 200-Yard Freestyle Swim Performance,” *Research Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1968): 355–60; “Is It OK to Swim Right after Eating?” *Mayo Clinic Healthy Lifestyle: Infant and Toddler Health*, <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/infant-and-toddler-health/in-depth/childrens-health/art-20044936?pg=2>; Elizabeth F. Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Henry F. Fradella, “Why Judges Should Admit Expert Testimony on the Unreliability of Eyewitness Testimony,” *Federal Courts Law Review* 2 (2007): 2–18; Saul M. Kassir, Phoebe C. Ellsworth, and Vicki L. Smith, “The ‘General Acceptance’ of Psychological Research on Eyewitness Testimony: A Survey of the Experts,” *American Psychologist* 44, no. 8 (August 1989): 1089–98.

31. See Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993); Debbie Nathan and Michael Snedeker, *Satan’s Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

32. Eric A. Eliason, “Ouija,” in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 534.

33. Stephen C. Taysom, “‘Satan Mourns Naked upon the Earth’: Locating Mormon Possession and Exorcism Rituals in the American Religious Landscape, 1830–1977,” unpublished manuscript in author’s possession.

Later in the 1980s, a wave of criminal prosecutions swept across the country targeting day care workers, teachers, and neighbors with accusations of satanic ritual abuse, with lurid descriptions of outlandish cultic ceremonies that inverted or otherwise desecrated Christian (often Catholic) rites involving ritual and magical objects. The main accusers were patients of psychologists who touted—now thoroughly discredited—recovered memory therapy.<sup>34</sup> But while it lasted, this modern version of the Salem witch hysteria ruined hundreds of lives. Scores of people went to prison based on no evidence other than the nonsensical and contradictory testimony of coached children.<sup>35</sup> One notable set of cases happened in Lehi, Utah, and satanic ritual abuse cases in Utah often claimed participation in secret, multigenerational satanic versions of LDS temple ceremonies.<sup>36</sup>

It is unclear if the American public fully understands that there never were any secret satanic cults ritually abusing people and that those who claimed to remember such abuse were lying, delusional, or experiencing a now much better understood psychological phenomenon of falsely created, not recovered, memory.<sup>37</sup> Some reporters, notably, Geraldo Rivera, have since publically apologized for their role in stirring up the

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34. Toward the end of the scare, as scholarly evidence began to pile up against recovered memory therapy, Elder Richard G. Scott gave a conference talk warning against "improper therapeutic approaches," "leading questions," and "excessive probing into every minute detail of past experiences." These may "unwittingly trigger thoughts that are more imagination or fantasy than reality. They could lead to condemnation of another for acts that were not committed. While likely few in numbers, I know of cases where such therapy has caused great injustice to the innocent from unwittingly stimulated accusations that were later proven false. Memory, particular adult memory of childhood experience, is fallible. Remember, false accusation is also a sin." Richard G. Scott, "Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse," *Ensign* 22, no. 5 (1992): 31–33.

35. See Richard Beck, *We Believe the Children: A Moral Panic in the 1980s* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015).

36. For an overview of LDS and anti-Mormon responses throughout the scare and more detail on the Lehi case, see Massimo Introvigne, "A Rumor of Devils: Allegations of Satanic Child Abuse and Mormonism, 1985–1994," Center for Studies on New Religions, [http://www.cesnur.org/2001/archive/mi\\_mormons.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2001/archive/mi_mormons.htm).

37. See Elizabeth Loftus and Katherine Ketchum, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memory and Allegations of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); C. J. Brainerd and V. F. Reyna, *The Science of False Memory*, Oxford Psychology Series, no. 38 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

frenzy.<sup>38</sup> The news media has not been as thorough in reporting the collapse of the scare as it was zealous in promoting it.

People tend to remember sensational accusations more than they remember that they were false. So today, when an average American hears the word *occult* or considers the use of objects guided by unseen forces, the first thing they think of is likely *not* the kind of enlightening, esoteric ancient knowledge Joseph Smith sought to recover, but rather more recent events casting these concepts in an entirely different and negative light.

### **To Recognize and Root Out, or Gather and Embrace? What Does the Bible Say?**

When confronted with practices unfamiliar to us, we often assume they are illicit and use terms like *magic* or *superstition* to refer to them. In Mormon studies, if a scholar points out possible but unfamiliar influences in our intellectual history, the reaction is often defensive denial. Scholars without experience in Mormon studies or folklore, who venture into the Mormon magic question, can seem to engage in imaginative selective reinterpretation of Mormon intellectual history. John L. Brooke's Bancroft Prize-winning *Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844* is an example. To critics, Brooke's book takes seeming similarity, rather than clear causal connection, as evidence that LDS doctrinal concepts had their origins in seventeenth-century European alchemic and hermetic practices by way of the radical reformation's clandestine undercurrent in colonial New England. Brooke seemingly magnifies beyond recognition the significance of what may be at best a thin trickle of influence, while overlooking much clearer and closer probable inspirations for LDS concepts, such as the Campbell-Stone movement. Like Mormons, these Christian primitivists, with whom Sidney Rigdon's flock affiliated before his conversion, rejected creeds; insisted their churches be named after Jesus Christ and not a movement (Methodist), form of church governance (Episcopal, Presbyterian), practice (Baptist), or person other than Jesus (Lutheran); and saw themselves as neither protestant nor Catholic, believing they were instead a "restoration" of early Christianity—a term they often used along with "age of accountability" (usually after eight years old), baptism

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38. B. A. Robinson, "Geraldo Rivera: Satanic Ritual Abuse and Recovered Memories," *ReligiousTolerance.org*, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/geraldo.htm>.

by immersion as a "saving ordinance" (unlike Evangelicals, who consider the LDS/Restorationist view akin to works and hence a denial of salvation by grace alone), and "first four principles of the gospel" being faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. These concepts began to be discussed in this way in Mormonism after significant numbers of Campbell-Stone restorationists joined.<sup>39</sup> Initial LDS responses to Brooke also saw him shortshrifting the deeper connections Mormons point to in the biblical Near East and early Christianity.

But recent work by Samuel Brown persuasively argues that Brooke's thesis may be more solid than first thought and should be less controversial to the faithful.<sup>40</sup> Like early Mormons, the hermetic traditions Brooke identifies as influences on Joseph Smith also referenced ancient biblical antecedents. Furthermore, Brooke rightly points out that those identifying folk magic as evidence of Mormon credulity overlook past scientific heroes like Isaac Newton, who delved deeply into magical alchemy. Newton wrote over a million words on the subject and understood his magical work as one and the same as what later readers have teased out as his scientific pursuits.<sup>41</sup> Time has been kind to Brooke in some LDS scholarly circles. Many who were initially suspicious of the book, myself included, gladly attended a 2015 Mormon History

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39. Some of these ideas are so central to Campbell-Stone Restorationism that they are listed prominently on the "Restoration Movement" Wikipedia page dedicated to them, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration\\_Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Restoration_Movement). Other similarities I learned in long discussions with pastors affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and the Churches of Christ. (When you can only name your church after Christ it makes it difficult to distinguish similarly named successor churches.) We found each other in U.S. Army chaplain training, where each morning Protestants were told to go into one room for a devotional, Catholics into another room. Sometimes we went to these services. Other times we chatted in the hall between the rooms, sometimes joined by the similarly non-Protestant/Catholic rabbi. For a treatment of the distinctive nature of LDS Restorationism through the lens of a scholar in the Campbell-Stone tradition who taught at Pepperdine, the Church of Christ's "BYU," see Richard T. Hughes, "Early Mormonism and the Eclipse of Religious Pluralism," in *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*, ed. Eric A. Eliason (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 23–46.

40. Brown, "Reconsidering Lucy Mack Smith's Folk Magic Confession," 1–12.

41. Allred, "Early Mormon 'Magic,'" 191.



Association panel organized in honor of the twentieth anniversary of his book's publication, reported in the *Journal of Mormon History*.<sup>42</sup>

Evangelical anti-Mormons also seem bedeviled by magic—seeing folk magic as evidence of Joseph Smith's non-Christian paganism.<sup>43</sup> However, celebrating Jesus's birth with decorative greenery drawn from pre-Christian Germanic practices, in late December, in a continuation of Roman festivities in honor of Saturn—a complex god associated with agriculture, hard partying, and gift giving<sup>44</sup>—is apparently okay, as is celebrating Jesus's resurrection by painting eggs and fetishizing newborn animals after the manner of worship once presumably directed toward Eostre/Eástre—a Germanic goddess of the dawn who gave Easter its name, according to the Venerable Bede and those early and most famous folklorists, the brothers Grimm.<sup>45</sup> To be fair, speculative reconstructions of the Eástre/Easter connection have fallen somewhat out of favor, and a vigorous movement exists among some Evangelicals that takes their own tradition to task for countenancing supposed pagan survivals and intrusions in modern Christian practice with titles such as *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?*; *Christianity: The Origins of a Pagan Religion*; and *Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices*.<sup>46</sup> It is also widely understood by historians that many

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42. "Reassessing Refiner's Fire: A Twentieth-Anniversary Retrospective," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 4 (2015): 177–237.

43. This is not a minor issue for critics of Mormonism. It has been a central thrust of their arguments since the early years of the Restoration. See J. Spencer Fluhman, "A Peculiar People": *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Scott F. Hershey, *Mormonism: Unscriptural, Pagan, and Immoral* (1900; repr., Whitefish, Mont.: Kessinger Publishing, 2010); "There Is Nothing More Pagan: Mormon Teaching," *Chick Publications*, January/February 1985, <http://www.chick.com/bc/1985/mormonism.asp>; "Mormonism Is More Pagan Than Christian," *YouTube*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z32N1GRW\\_Qw&safe=active](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z32N1GRW_Qw&safe=active).

44. See Christian Räscher, *Pagan Christmas: The Plants, Spirits, and Rituals at the Origins of Yuletide* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2006), 154–56.

45. Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 3d ed. (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1854), 267–68. Bede, in *Temporum Ratione* (probably in the early 700s), mentions that April was called Eosturmonath among the Anglo-Saxons after a goddess of theirs named Eostre. See <http://www.manygods.org.uk/articles/essays/Eostre.shtml>. Thanks to Roger Terry for pointing out the Bede reference.

46. Bruce K. Waltke, *Finding the Will of God: A Pagan Notion?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Philippe Walter, *Christianity: The Origins of a Pagan*

esoteric ideas and practices of America's founders and presidents would not pass the scrutiny of Christian depaganizers—perhaps most notably freemasonry, which also has a relationship to Mormonism's founding, hopefully made somewhat more sensible by my arguments here.<sup>47</sup>

Such seeming inconsistencies of opprobrium show up in the Bible as well. The same Bible that proclaims "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. 22:18) and seems to condemn Saul's necromantic visit to the witch of Endor, portrays favorably, or at least without criticism, Jacob's using sympathetic magic in showing pregnant sheep bark-stripped rods to make them bear more of the striped or speckled lambs Laban had agreed to give him; Joseph of Egypt owning a silver divining cup; prophets and apostles using physical objects to discover the will of God, such as casting lots to determine a guilty party or choose a new apostle; and consulting the bejeweled ephod or Urim and Thummim priestly adornments to determine a course of action or the mind of God.<sup>48</sup> Such practices seem little different in essence than Joseph Smith using a divining rod or a seer stone. Is it any wonder that Bible-literate early Mormons came to call Joseph Smith's devices for finding lost objects or translating ancient records a Urim and Thummim or even *the* Urim and Thummim?<sup>49</sup>

Such practices characterize Jesus's ministry as well. It took place in the religious milieu of several other non-Christian religions from which it emerged, including Judaism and what Morton Smith has called "native, Palestinian, Semitic paganism."<sup>50</sup> Bible scholars generally understand that Jesus's contemporaries interpreted his miracles as magical

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*Religion* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2006); Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity? Exploring the Roots of Our Church Practices* (Ventura, Calif.: BarnaBooks, 2008).

47. Mitch Horowitz, *Occult America: White House Séances, Ouija Circles, Masons, and the Secret Mystic History of Our Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2010); Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple Ordinances," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 159–237, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/freemasonry-and-the-origins-of-modern-temple-ordinances/>.

48. See 1 Sam. 28:5–19; Gen. 30:25–43; Gen. 44:1–5; Jonah 1:7–8; Acts 1:24–26; Ex. 28:4, 29:5, 39:2; Lev. 8:7; Judg. 8:26–27, 17:5; 1 Sam. 21:9; 2 Sam 6:14; Hosea 3:4; Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6; Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65.

49. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Book of Mormon Translation," <https://www.lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation?lang=eng>.

50. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Newburyport, Mass.: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2014), 68.

and that the Gospels depict Christ's actions as akin to magical practice. For example, Christ's removal to the wilderness for forty days parallels shamanistic training. Smith argues that the words Christ used to raise Jairus's daughter, "Talitha cumi,"<sup>51</sup> were similar to a magical formula of the day. Jesus's spitting in dirt to make a paste for anointing a blind man's eyes and then telling him to ritually wash in an enchanted pool would be recognizable to virtually any traditional healer or magician of any time or place. A claim of inappropriate miracle working may stand behind the charge against Jesus in John 18:30.<sup>52</sup>

Roman Catholicism—which has had two thousand years to construct a highly developed discourse concerning problematic aspects of Christian history—uses the term *Interpretatio Christiana* to refer to the ways in which Christian beliefs, practices, worship sites, and calendar events have supplanted, co-opted, adapted, adopted, changed, copied, reinterpreted, continued, suppressed, and reused pagan antecedents. Though they have tracked the issue and considered carefully how to handle it, Catholics tend to be less surprised and panicky about this topic than Protestants, some of whom seem to rediscover the issue every few generations and call again for banning Christmas and Halloween as our Puritan forefathers did and Jehovah's Witnesses still do.

While some contemporary Evangelicals may be myopic in their criticisms of Joseph Smith, they are correct to see the Bible as a key to understanding Joseph Smith's "magical" practices. According to Bible scholar Shawna Dolansky, a magic-versus-religion distinction "is not represented in . . . ancient Near Eastern literatures," and ancient Hebrews did not make a distinction between licit and illicit magico-religious practices based on form or content.<sup>53</sup> In the cultural context of ancient Israel, the prohibitions found in Deuteronomy 18 and Leviticus 19–20 do not categorically condemn magic. "Magic as a category . . . was not illegal," says Dolansky. "The mediation of divine power . . . in the hands of priests and prophets [was] perfectly legal."<sup>54</sup> According to Bible

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51. Mark 5:41; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 95; John 9:6–7.

52. John W. Welch, "The Legal Cause of Action against Jesus in John 18:29–30," in *Celebrating Easter: The 2006 BYU Easter Conference*, ed. Thomas A. Wayment and Keith J. Wilson (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2007), 157–76.

53. Shawna Dolansky, *Now You See It, Now You Don't: Biblical Perspectives on the Relationship between Magic and Religion* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 20–27, 54.

54. Dolansky, *Now You See It*, 99.

scholars, Moses turning his staff into a snake was not the same as Pharaoh's magicians doing so, since Moses was a prophet of God and Jannes and Jambres were not. From a biblical perspective, determining whether Joseph Smith's treasure seeking, seer-stone gazing, blessing of "magic" handkerchiefs, alleged Kabbalistic dabbling, and so forth were proper should not be based on whether moderns see them as weird or formally similar to pagan practices, but on whether or not Joseph Smith was an authorized prophet of God. Presumably, since Joseph Smith claimed to be God's instrument for restoring biblical priesthood authority, he would have welcomed this basis for determination.

In both Christendom and Mormondom, the seeming disappearance of "folk magic," either by abandonment or normalization into official practice, is partly the result of Max Weber's routinization of charisma process and partly the result of developing methods of exercising divine authority. What today might be regarded as mixing folk and official practices was seen in the past as an unproblematic unified whole. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Mormonism, Latter-day Saints, including women known to have individual healing gifts, were as likely to be sought out for the laying on of hands and the administering of traditional remedies as were the chain-of-command priesthood authority.<sup>55</sup> Sometimes the person sought out would be one of the itinerant, ordained, but relatively uncorrelated patriarchs who for a donation would pronounce blessings of lineage, healing, or prophecy.<sup>56</sup> Going to a physician would have been even less likely considering territorial-period Mormons' almost Christian Science-like aversion to professional medicine—a well-founded aversion considering medical science only began to do more good than harm at about the same time Mormon attitudes began to change in favor of professional medicine.<sup>57</sup> The now long-forgotten ordinance of rebaptism served not only to signal recommitment to the faith but also as a cleansing remedy for illness, as recorded in temple records until the 1920s as "baptisms for health."<sup>58</sup> The

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55. Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 64–75; Claire Noall, "Superstitions, Customs, and Prescriptions of Mormon Midwives," *California Folklore Quarterly* 3 (April 1944): 103–4.

56. Irene M. Bates, "Patriarchal Blessings and the Routinization of Charisma," *Dialogue* 26, no. 3 (1993): 1–29.

57. See Lester E. Bush Jr., *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints: Science, Sense, and Scripture* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).

58. Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole," 69–112.

consecrated olive oil today dabbed on one's crown for priesthood blessings was then perhaps peppermint oil, fish oil, or bear tallow poured liberally, or mixed into ointments and poultices for topical application to wounds, or was drunk straight from the bottle for stomach and bowel ailments.<sup>59</sup> For contemporary Mormons who believe in both medicine and priesthood blessings but tend to keep them conceptually separate, time can divide as effectively as religion or culture—making ancestral practices seem as unusual as those of exotic foreigners.

### The Future of Magic?

In considering disconcerting differences we find in the past, it might be worthwhile to try to imagine what common, even indisputable, beliefs or practice today will seem ridiculous, dangerous, superstitious, or even morally impossible one hundred years from now. What ideas will complete the journey of all ideas that, according to the old saw, “are born as heresy, bloom as orthodoxy, then die as superstition”? Our tendency to presume that what we do now is obvious and eternal seriously hampers any useful speculation along these lines, as does the tendency to assume inspired change in Church practice will follow one's own political and moral intuitions. Almost anything we come up with could seem as silly as the claim that, in the future, we will be aghast that we quaintly ate organic foods rather than “jelly donuts,” whose health benefits we now know to be unquestionable, as an incredulous far-future denizen noted a long time ago in Woody Allen's Rip Van Winkle-esque 1973 science-fiction comedy *Sleeper*. As Patrick Mason suggests, we are guests in the past and should not assume ill of our hosts if we do not, at first, understand them. The future is even more inscrutable than the past. Perhaps it is wise to always remember that our present will be an odd-seeming past for people in the future, with perhaps nothing more odd about us than our speculations about the future.

With this in mind, there is no reason to regard magic-seeming practices—even if fully embraced by Joseph Smith for his whole life as foundational to his teachings—as counterevidence to his prophetic

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59. Jonathan A. Stapley, “‘Pouring in Oil’: The Development of the Modern Mormon Healing Ritual,” in *By Our Rites of Worship: Latter-day Saint Views on Ritual in Scripture and Practice*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 283–316, especially 310; see also Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, “The Forms and the Power: The Development of Mormon Ritual Healing to 1847,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (2009): 44–51.

claims. They might have been authorized; they might not have been magic, since "magic" is a uselessly vague and deictic term; they may end up validated by science; they may only be the victims of ever-changing boundary-maintenance labeling; they might have been just like what biblical prophets did; they might not have been pagan, only no longer very familiar. In light of Joseph Smith's statement that "one [of] the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism <is> to receive thruth [truth] let it come from where it may,"<sup>60</sup> the idea that the restoration of all truth might draw from folk magic traditions should be no more shocking than the fact that many Protestant hymns have found their way into LDS hymnbooks. Likewise, a photo of a small brown rock should cause no more shock and consternation than the voluminous displays of yuletide greenery that have come to characterize the First Presidency's Christmas broadcast.

With the biblical precedent that form, content, seeming similarities to paganism, and subjective feelings of weirdness are not legitimate reasons to call out practices as inappropriate for God-fearing people, and with the understanding that still today, as in Bible times, the Lord's anointed determine what is and is not licit, perhaps Mormons can safely put up mistletoe, hide Easter eggs, and even witch wells (but maybe not scry with seer stones?), regardless of their ostensible pagan and previous "folk magic" uses. That some Saints continue to be troubled by such issues perhaps reveals more about modern attitudes toward earlier and unfamiliar practices—and the work Mormon folklorists have yet to do de-exoticizing them—than it does any real problems with Mormon origins.

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Eric A. Eliason is a folklore professor in the English Department at Brigham Young University. His publications include: *Latter-day Lore: A Handbook of Mormon Folklore Studies*, with Tom Mould; *The J. Golden Kimball Stories*; and *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*. Thanks is due Philip Barlow, Terry Givens, Jack Welch, and Mark Ashurst-McGee for their particularly helpful readings of, and contributions to, this essay. David Allred's scholarship and ongoing collaboration have been particularly helpful and informative.

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60. Joseph Smith, Journal, July 9, 1843, in *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), 55.



VOL. XX.

SALT LAKE CITY, JANUARY 15, 1885.

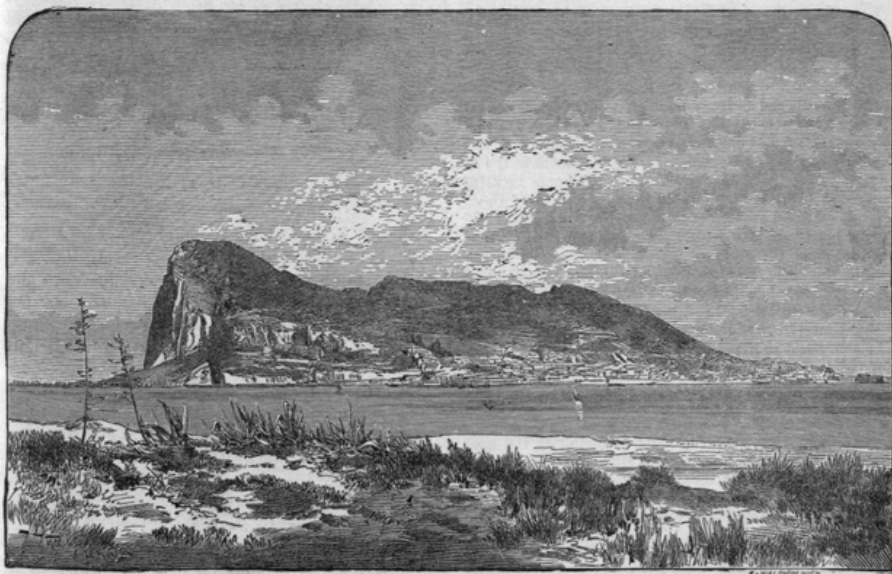
NO. 2.

GIBRALTAR.

ONE of the strongest positions of which England is to-day the possessor is the rock of Gibraltar, shown in the engraving, which forms the southern extremity of Spain. Its length is about three miles while its average breadth is only three-quarters of a mile. It is connected with the mainland

remains for defense and there is sufficient food for the maintenance of the defenders.

The rock is composed of a species of gray marble. Near the sea the surface is sandy and red in appearance, and higher up a scanty growth of grass or moss covers it. The highest



by a strip of land called the "neutral ground," which cannot be seen at any distance as it is so low. Overlooking this "neutral ground," as well as the sea are some very powerful batteries, and the fortifications are so strong that the rock may be regarded as impregnable, so long as a sufficient garrison

point, called the Sugar Loaf, is 1,439 feet above the level of the sea. It is perforated by many caverns some few of which are artificial, but mostly natural. The "Halls of St. Michael," the largest of these underground passages, have an entrance 1,000 feet above the sea. Passing downward through spacious

This article in the *Juvenile Instructor* of January 15, 1885, elicited a series of articles about the history of Gibraltar and missionary work there by Edward Stevenson.

# Proselyting on the Rock of Gibraltar, 1853–1855

## The Letters of Edward Stevenson to the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1885

Reid L. Neilson

In January 1885, the Mormon *Juvenile Instructor* magazine ran a short cover story on the history of Gibraltar, known as “the Rock,” the British overseas territory located on the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula bordering Spain. While the magazine aimed to educate Latter-day Saints about the cosmopolitan world generally, the Rock did have a noteworthy place in Mormon history. The editor, George Q. Cannon, wrote, “As in the mother country [Great Britain] all religious societies are said to enjoy perfect freedom. Still when Elders Edward Stevenson and N[athan] T. Porter arrived in Gibraltar in March, 1853, to preach ‘Mormonism,’ they were immediately taken before the police to plead their cause.” Cannon concluded his short secular and religious history of the British territory, “Elder Porter was required to leave and the only thing which saved Elder Stevenson from sharing the same fate was the fact that he had been born on the rock; still he was forbidden to preach his religion. He, however, during his labors of one year, and amid great privations and trials, succeeded in bringing several persons into the Church.”<sup>1</sup> More than three decades had passed since the First Presidency had sent Stevenson and Porter to Gibraltar as missionaries by the time the related magazine article appeared in the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1885.

Another article on the Rock or even a mention of British Gibraltar in the future pages of the *Juvenile Instructor* would have been highly unlikely had the cover story not caught the eye of Stevenson, by then sixty-four years old and living in northern Utah. Upon reading the short

1. “Gibraltar,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (January 15, 1885): 18.



article on his native homeland, he excitedly wrote a letter to the editor of the *Juvenile Instructor*, which Cannon published the following month. “On the first page of No. 2 of the present volume of your magazine there is presented a very good view of Gibraltar,” Stevenson began his response. “This being the place of my birth (May 1st, 1820), and as Gibraltar is such an interesting place and has played such an important part in the struggle in Europe between Christianity and Paganism, therefore I venture a few more facts, historically, concerning this place which is very attractive to sight-seers and is one of the most glorious possessions of Europe.”<sup>2</sup> Desiring that his fellow Latter-day Saints in the Intermountain West might better appreciate the secular history of his British homeland, Stevenson launched into a prolonged secular history of the Rock, which ran for months in the Mormon magazine.<sup>3</sup> He concluded his seventh epistle on the history of Gibraltar with the following synopsis: “It is the key to the Mediterranean and is of great importance in the defense of England against foreign powers.”<sup>4</sup>

But beginning with his eighth letter, Stevenson’s ten subsequent missives (for a total of seventeen letters to the *Juvenile Instructor*) chronicle his Mormon “missionary experience”<sup>5</sup> as a young elder in Gibraltar in 1853–55. “At a special conference held in Salt Lake City, August 28, 1852, I was called to take a mission to Gibraltar in company with Elder N T. Porter,” he began his proselyting narrative. “It was at this conference that the revelation on celestial marriage was first made public, and was taken to the world by the greatest number of Elders that had ever been called on missions at any one time before.”<sup>6</sup> Stevenson then narrates his mission to Gibraltar with great passion and some prejudice: the

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2. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar [Letter I],” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (February 15, 1885): 55.

3. Stevenson, “Gibraltar [Letter I],” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (February 15, 1885): 55; Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter II,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (March 1, 1885): 66; Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter III,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (March 15, 1885): 93–94; Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter IV,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (April 1, 1885): 100; Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter V,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (April 15, 1885): 118; Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter VI,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (May 1, 1885): 130–31; and Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter VII,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (May 15, 1885): 159.

4. Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter VII,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (May 15, 1885): 159.

5. Unlike letters 1–7, letters 8–17 all have “missionary experience” in their subtitles.

6. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter VIII, Missionary Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (June 1, 1885): 175.

righteous Mormons are constantly trying to build Zion at home and abroad while the wicked Protestants and Catholics he encounters are trying to thwart their progress at every turn. His story is filled with black and white characters and organizations—there is little gray in his reminiscent account—like the memoirs left by so many Latter-day Saint missionaries during the nineteenth-century.

Still, Stevenson's detailed account of his experiences in Gibraltar is significant because he was one of only two Latter-day Saints to ever proselyte and temporarily establish the Church on the Rock during the first 140 years of the Church's history. As a native-born Gibraltarian, British citizen, and later American resident, he offered a unique perspective on his missionary experiences. There was no one else qualified or available to tell this chapter of the Mormon past. Moreover, Stevenson was one of the great personal record keepers of his generation. His contemporary journals and reminiscent accounts of the early events of the Restoration, including the experiences of Joseph Smith, remain some of the most trusted resources to this day.

### **Stevenson's Early Years**

Stevenson was uniquely suited by nativity to serve as a missionary in the British colony of Gibraltar. As later experiences made clear, only a native Gibraltarian would be allowed to proselyte on the Rock in the mid-nineteenth century. Stevenson was born on May 1, 1820, in Gibraltar, the fourth son of Joseph Stevenson and Elizabeth Stevens. In 1827, at the tender age of seven, he immigrated with his family to the United States, settling first in New York and then in Michigan. In 1832, his father passed away, leaving him in the care of his mother and siblings. In 1833, three years after The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in upstate New York, Mormon missionaries Jared Carter and Joseph Woods evangelized in Michigan. Although still a young man, Stevenson believed their words and embraced their teachings. He was baptized on December 20, 1833, and his mother and several siblings also joined the Church. As a family, they gathered with the Latter-day Saints in Missouri and endured the trials that followed the Church and its members across that state. While living in Far West, Stevenson became more acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, having first met him while living in Michigan. Stevenson was eventually exiled from Missouri with the body of the Church and moved to the temporary safety of Nauvoo, Illinois. There he married his first wife Nancy A. Porter (the sister of his future missionary companion Nathan T. Porter) in 1845 and

was endowed in the Nauvoo Temple in 1846. He crossed the plains in the Charles C. Rich Company in 1847, his first of nearly twenty crossings over the plains on behalf of the Church as a leader and missionary.<sup>7</sup>

### **Nathan T. Porter**

Stevenson's brother-in-law, Nathan Tanner Porter, was born on July 10, 1820, in Corinth, Vermont, to Sanford and Nancy Porter. In 1830, Lyman Wight and John Carrol preached to the Porter family in Illinois, and they were baptized in August 1831. They joined the main body of Saints, first moving to Independence, Missouri, in 1832 and then to Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1839. Porter was called on missions to the eastern states in 1841 and 1844, but he returned early from his 1844 mission because of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. In 1847, the Sanford Porter family left Nauvoo and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley that October. Nathan married Rebecca Ann Cherry on November 12, 1848. He was called to accompany Stevenson to Gibraltar in 1852.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Early Mormon Mission to Gibraltar**

Mormon evangelism in the Mediterranean world began several years before Church leaders assigned Edward Stevenson and Nathan T. Porter to Gibraltar in August 1852. In February 1849, less than two years after he led the vanguard company of Mormon pioneers into the Salt Lake Valley, President Brigham Young called four new Apostles—Charles C. Rich, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, and Franklin D. Richards—to the Quorum of the Twelve. That fall Young assigned three Apostles to lead the Church's new missions in Europe: John Taylor to France; Lorenzo Snow to Italy; and Erastus Snow to Denmark. These Apostles led the beginnings of Mormon missionary work in continental Europe. Lorenzo

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7. "Three-Quarters of a Century," *Deseret Evening News*, May 1, 1895, 1; Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compilation of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Historical Co. and Andrew Jenson Memorial Association, 1901–36), 1:214–16; Joseph Grant Stevenson, "The Life of Edward Stevenson, Member of the First Council of Seventy, Friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955).

8. Nathan Tanner Porter, "The Record of Nathan Tanner Porter," typescript, MS 15250, Church History Library.

Snow and his companions—Joseph Toronto, Thomas Stenhouse, and Jabez Woodard—arrived in Italy in June 1850 and began proselyting among the Waldensians, a Protestant splinter group in northwest Italy. Over the next two years they translated and published the Book of Mormon in Italian. But missionary work was difficult among the Italians, Protestant or Catholic.<sup>9</sup> Struggling to find a foothold in Italy, Lorenzo Snow determined to expand his Italian Mission into the larger Mediterranean world and even into British India to the east. In early 1851, he sent William Willis and Hugh Findlay to India<sup>10</sup> and Thomas Lorenzo Obray to Malta.<sup>11</sup> Snow had intended to go to India himself, but the vessel he intended to take was damaged.<sup>12</sup>

In the spring of 1852, Lorenzo Snow was called back to Church headquarters in Utah along with the other Apostles evangelizing in Europe. Before he left, however, he expressed his hope that missionary work might spread to the Iberian Peninsula. That May, Snow issued a call from the mission headquarters in Malta for Mormon elders to begin proselyting work in Gibraltar. Sharing his desires with President Samuel W. Richards of the British Mission, he explained: “The English and Italian languages are much spoken at Gibraltar as well as the Spanish, and we are anxious to see the kingdom of God beginning to spread its light if possible through the Spanish dominions, and feel to do all in our power to effect so desirable an object. We cannot help but believe that the Lord has some good people in that place.” Snow himself was apparently

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9. See James A. Toronto, “‘A Continual War, Not of Arguments, but of Bread and Cheese’: Opening the First LDS Mission in Italy, 1849–67,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31 (Summer 2005): 188–232; and Michael W. Homer, “*Il Libro di Mormon*: Anticipating Growth beyond Italy’s Waldensian Valleys,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002): 40–44.

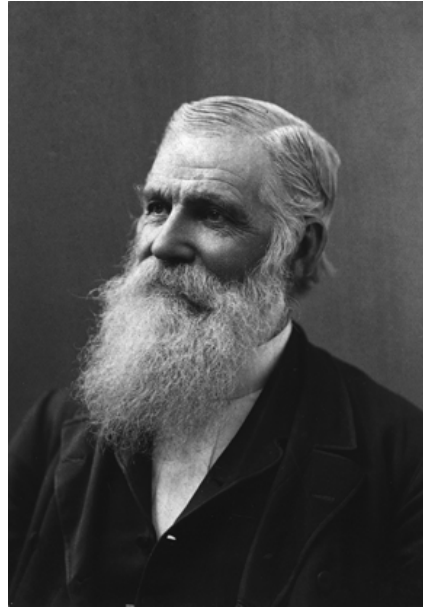
10. See R. Lanier Britsch, “The East India Mission of 1851–56: Crossing the Boundaries of Culture, Religion, and Law,” *Journal of Mormon History* 27 (Fall 2001): 150–76; and R. Lanier Britsch, *Nothing More Heroic: The Compelling Story of the First Latter-day Saint Missionaries in India* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999).

11. Andrew Jenson, “Malta Mission,” in *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing, 1941), 465–66.

12. David J. Whittaker, “Richard Ballantyne and the Defense of Mormonism in India in the 1850s,” in *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1985), 179–80.

planning to visit Gibraltar to observe conditions firsthand.<sup>13</sup> “In a few days I will have completed my arrangements here and shall then, the Lord willing, take my departure for that country, and spend there what little time yet remains at my control, with a view of making an opening as wisdom may direct.” The Apostle then asked for a “wise, energetic, faithful, and experienced Elder” to begin proselyting on the Rock, as well as additional missionaries for Bombay, India.<sup>14</sup>

Samuel Richards published Snow’s letter in his mission’s periodical, the *Millennial Star*, and added his own letter of endorsement to open the Rock to missionary work. “The letter of Elder Lorenzo Snow, published in the last Number of the Star, contains an important call for Elders, to assist in moving on the work in Gibraltar and Bombay, to which we cheerfully respond, and hope the Presidents of Conferences will report to us, without delay, such Elders as they may be acquainted with, who are suitably qualified for those important stations.” President Richards suggested that single elders or those married men who “can provide for their families” would be excellent choices. “An Elder with some knowledge of the French, Spanish, and Italian languages, would be peculiarly adapted to



Edward Stevenson, photo undated. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve Inc.

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13. The first foreign LDS missions were created in Great Britain, and from there missionaries were sent throughout the British Empire. The plan to start a mission in Gibraltar fits this pattern. See, for example, “The Church in 1870,” in *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Brandon S. Plewe, 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2014), 120–21.

14. Lorenzo Snow to Samuel W. Richards, Malta, May 1, 1852, published as Lorenzo Snow, “The Malta Mission: Letter from Elder Lorenzo Snow,” *Millennial Star* 14 (June 5, 1852): 236–37.

fill the call for Gibraltar.”<sup>15</sup> With his three-year mission complete, Snow departed from Malta and the Italian Mission, stopping over in Gibraltar for several days on his way to Liverpool, England. After crossing the Atlantic to New York City, he arrived in Salt Lake City on July 30, 1852.<sup>16</sup> One month later, Snow’s hopes of opening Gibraltar to missionary work and sending more elders to India were realized when the First Presidency called a special missionary conference in Salt Lake City.

By the summer of 1852, Stevenson, Porter, and their families had been living in the Salt Lake Valley for over four years. In late August, about two thousand Latter-day Saints gathered at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City to receive counsel from Church leaders. President Brigham Young stated the purpose of the early conference was to conduct “business pertaining to foreign missions, and of giving to the brethren an opportunity to cross the plains before the cold weather.” On Saturday morning, August 28, 1852, First Counselor Heber C. Kimball, Apostles George A. Smith, John Taylor, and Ezra T. Benson, and President Brigham Young gave sermons on the importance of missionary work. They spoke of it as a sacred responsibility and mentioned its associated difficulties.<sup>17</sup>

When President Young finished his sermon, Thomas Bullock, clerk of the conference, concluded the session by reading the names of the more than one hundred elders who were assigned to serve missions throughout the world. They were assigned to England, Ireland, Wales, France, Germany, Berlin, Norway, Denmark, Gibraltar, Hindustan (India), Siam (Thailand), China, the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa), Nova Scotia and the British Provinces (Canada), the West Indies, British Guiana, Texas, New Orleans, St. Louis, Iowa, Washington D.C., Australia, and the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands.<sup>18</sup> In the years between the 1844 martyrdom of Joseph Smith and this 1852 conference, the highest number of missionaries was seventy-two in 1845, and the average number of missionaries between 1845 and 1851 was about forty-four.<sup>19</sup> The dramatic increase in missionary numbers seems to have been driven by

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15. Samuel W. Richards, “Editorial: Call for Elders for Gibraltar and Bombay,” *Millennial Star* 14 (June 12, 1852): 250.

16. Eliza R. Snow Smith, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 230–32.

17. “A Special Conference of the Elders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints,” *Deseret News Extra*, September 14, 1852, 7.

18. “Special Conference,” 9–10.

19. Gordon Irving, “Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the LDS Missionary Force, 1830–1974,” *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 1 (Salt

the political revolutions that were upheaving European societies, leading millenarian Mormon leaders to think that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ was nigh. Edward Stevenson and Nathan Porter, the only two men assigned to Gibraltar, were as stunned at their assignment as the other newly called missionaries were at theirs. This conference marked one of the most important moments in Mormon missionary history.

The next morning, Sunday, August 29, the Latter-day Saints again assembled for the concluding sessions of that fall's general conference. It was in this setting that Apostle Orson Pratt first announced publicly the Mormon belief in and practice of plural marriage.<sup>20</sup> This theological bombshell would have a major impact on the missionaries and their labors abroad, as well as the lives and families of the missionaries when they returned from Europe.

Stevenson's proselyting efforts in his native Gibraltar mark just the beginning of his remarkable missionary legacy for the Church. He departed from Utah with the Europe-bound company of missionaries in September 1852, arrived in Gibraltar in March 1853, and evangelized there until early 1855. When Stevenson returned to Utah in the summer of 1855, he entered into polygamy, marrying several additional wives. His wives eventually bore him twenty-eight children. After Gibraltar, Stevenson served nine additional proselyting missions in North America and Europe and helped lead four emigrating companies from the East to Utah. He was also responsible for bringing Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris to Utah and for his rebaptism in September 1870. Three years after he detailed his missionary experiences in Gibraltar to George Q. Cannon and the readers of the *Juvenile Instructor* in 1885, he joined Andrew Jenson and Joseph S. Black on a special Church history mission to visit many of the early historic sites of the Restoration.<sup>21</sup> In October 1894, Stevenson was called to serve as one of the first Seven Presidents of Seventies, a position he honorably fulfilled until his passing on January 27, 1897, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He never did return to

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Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), 9–10.

20. "Special Conference," 14–22.

21. See Reid L. Neilson, Justin R. Bray, and Alan Johnson, eds., *Rediscovering the Sites of the Restoration: The 1888 Travel Writings of Mormon Historian Andrew Jenson, Edward Stevenson, and Joseph S. Black* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015).

his birthplace in Gibraltar following the close of his mission in 1855.<sup>22</sup> And the Church would not have another presence in Gibraltar until the early 1970s.<sup>23</sup>

Nathan Porter also continued to serve in the Church. After being forced out of Gibraltar in 1853, he labored in England until January 1856. While returning to Utah, he traveled with the Hodgetts company, a wagon company that somewhat shepherded the ill-fated Martin hand-cart company, and they arrived in Salt Lake in December 1856. He married his second wife, Eliza Ford, in 1857. Nathan Porter and Edward Stevenson were mission companions two more times, in 1869 and 1872, when they traveled to the eastern states. Both Stevenson and Porter were born in 1820, and they both died in 1897 (Porter died April 8, 1897).<sup>24</sup>

### **The Seventeen Letters of Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, Editor of the *Juvenile Instructor*, in 1885**

The value of these letters lies in the story they tell of missionary work for all who were sent out in the days after the Church publicly announced the practice of polygamy. Missionaries faced heavy persecution because of opposition to polygamy from magistrates and the general public. Like missionaries of other times, they experienced lack of funds, separation from family and friends, and having to work with little direction from Church leaders. They learned to trust in the Lord; as Stevenson concludes his last letter, “the Lord is good and kind to all who put their trust in Him.”<sup>25</sup>

As described above, Edward Stevenson wrote seventeen letters to George Q. Cannon, editor of the *Juvenile Instructor*, in response to a short cover story on the history of Gibraltar, which ran in January 1885. The January article barely made mention of Stevenson’s missionary sojourn there in 1853–55, nearly thirty years earlier. Cannon published Stevenson’s detailed letters in his magazine over a nine-month period,

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22. “Three-Quarters of a Century,” *Deseret News*, May 1, 1895, 1; and Joseph Grant Stevenson, “Stevenson, Edward,” in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, 1192.

23. “Gibraltar,” in 2013 *Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2014), 591–92.

24. Porter, “Record of Nathan Tanner Porter”; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel*, s.v. “Nathan Tanner Porter,” <https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/pioneers/20652/nathan-tanner-porter>.

25. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter XVII, Missionary Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (November 15, 1885): 339.



beginning on February 15 and ending on November 15, 1885. Historians are reliant on Stevenson's personal writings and his reminiscent accounts for the history of the Gibraltar mission field in the mid-1850s. There are no corroborating accounts or documents other than what Stevenson personally recorded at the time. Stevenson did send a number of letters back to Utah during his early mission, and their contributions to our understanding of what he experienced as a young missionary there in Gibraltar from 1853 to 1855 are noted below. It appears that Stevenson relied heavily on his 1850s writings (such as his letters, *Deseret News* correspondence, and regular diary entries) when he wrote his 1885 letters to Cannon. I have reproduced Stevenson's letters exactly as they appeared in the pages of the *Juvenile Instructor* (except for format and layout). I have not corrected or updated any misspellings or British spellings (given that he was a son of a British colony), grammar, or punctuation in the transcripts below, except where noted by brackets. Letters 1 through 7 are not included here because they do not contain any Mormon history content.

## The Letters

### Letter 8: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, June 1, 1885<sup>26</sup>

At a special conference held in Salt Lake City, August 28, 1852, I was called to take a mission to Gibraltar in company with Elder N. T. Porter. It was at this conference that the revelation on celestial marriage was first made public,<sup>27</sup> and was taken to the world by the greatest number of Elders that had ever been called on missions at any one time before.

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26. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter VIII, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (June 1, 1885): 175. Compare with Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 1," *Deseret News*, January 2, 1856, 338–39.

27. At a special conference meeting held August 28 and 29, 1852, Brigham Young and Orson Pratt publicly announced the practice of polygamy, which had been practiced privately for years. Rumors of Mormons practicing polygamy had long been circulating, but it wasn't until 1852 that the Mormons openly acknowledged it. See David J. Whittaker, "The Bone in the Throat: Orson Pratt and the Public Announcement of Plural Marriage," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (July 1987): 293–314.

It was agreed that the company going east should meet on the Weber River, forty-five miles from the city, and we would proceed from that point across the plains together. Daniel Spencer was elected captain of the company; Orson Spencer, chaplain; and Orson Pratt, preacher and general instructor. Our company consisted of eighty-four Elders, who had twenty carriages and eighty-eight horses and mules.

In crossing over the Little Mountain our carriage was broken down, and we left our baggage there, covered up with a buffalo robe, while we returned to the city to have the vehicle repaired. After getting the necessary repairs done we again started, but on account of storms were compelled to camp out at the mouth of Emigration Canyon. The next day we arrived at our camp outfit on the Little Mountain just in time to save it from a band of roving Indians. That night we camped all alone on the Big Mountain and were disturbed in our slumbers by the howling of the wolves. We slept very well, however, after having commended ourselves to the care of the Lord.

On the 20th of September, 1852, the whole company began to move and on the 1st of October we arrived at the Missouri River in the best of health and spirits. Our evenings on the journey had been spent around the camp fire discussing religious subjects and often being instructed by Apostle O. Pratt.

Our company now began to scatter to go to their various fields of labor. I joined a company and took steamer for St. Louis. We were kindly treated on board. A discussion took place in the cabin between Elder O. Pratt and Mr. Storon, president of the Missouri College, resulting in a Bible triumph in favor of Apostle Pratt.

In St. Louis, Elder Wm. Pitt found himself without sufficient money for his passage to his field of labor and was walking down the street with his head bowed down, wondering what he should do to obtain the necessary means. Suddenly he saw before him, on the walk, a ten-dollar bill, the exact amount required. He picked it up and after searching in vain for the owner, used it for procuring his passage to England. On November 11th,<sup>28</sup> twenty-one of us, who had engaged passage to Liverpool on

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28. Stevenson's letter to the *Deseret News*, as well as his personal diary, indicates that the missionaries actually boarded their ship on November 17. Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 1," 338; Edward Stevenson, *Diary*, November 17, 1852, Edward Stevenson Collection, 1849–1922, Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

a sailing vessel of 1,800 tons burden, set sail, and arrived at our destination on January 5th, 1853.<sup>29</sup> We buried one passenger, a Catholic, in the open sea. He was sewed up in a blanket and some weights were attached to the feet. Burial services, in the absence of one of their priests, were read by Elder Perigreen Sessions,<sup>30</sup> and he was then slid off a plank into the blue waters of the ocean. The usual customhouse overlooking of our baggage took place at Liverpool. A French stranger was detected with a crust surrounding a quantity of tobacco, making it look like a loaf of bread. The experiment cost him \$250.00.

While in New York our whole company were provided with passage and provisions with the exception of one Elder, who did not have sufficient money to buy food. A stranger came along and passed several of us, enquiring concerning our missions. But when he came to the only one not yet provided with his outfit, he dropped five dollars into his hand. With a tear of gratitude the stranger was blessed and God praised.

After visiting Prest. S. W. Richards<sup>31</sup> at 15 Wilton Street, Liverpool, and my friends in Leicester, London, Southampton and the Isle of Wight, myself and companion took passage from Southampton on her majesty's steam packet, *Iberia*,<sup>32</sup> on February 28th, 1853.<sup>33</sup> We had

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29. The missionaries sailed from New York to Liverpool, England, aboard the *American Union*, a Yankee ship that had been built in 1851. The ship operated in various lines until it became a transient in 1877. Conway B. Sonne, *Ships, Saints, and Mariners: A Maritime Encyclopedia of Mormon Migration, 1830–1890* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 13.

30. Perrigrine Sessions was on his way to preside over the Manchester Conference in 1852; he got sick on the journey and never recovered, so he was sent home in 1854.

31. Samuel Whitney Richards served many missions, and, from 1852 to 1854, he was president of the European Mission and oversaw the publication of the *Millennial Star*. Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:718–19, 4:318.

32. The *Iberia* was built in England in 1835 and had some of the best passenger accommodations of the period. It had three masts and was owned by the P. & O. Line. Sonne, *Ships, Saints, and Mariners*, 102.

33. Nathan Porter had this to say about their time in Southampton: "On the 11th (February 1853) we took the cars for South Hampton, the point of our embarkation for Gibraltar. Here we met with Elder James Wille, who also came with us across not only the plains but the sea also. He was now President over the Southampton Conference. We stopped in this conference until the 29th [sic] (February 1853), visiting the branches of the saints who contributed in furnishing means for our passage. Having now sufficient means we engaged passage on the steam Packet *Iberia*." Porter, "Record of Nathan Tanner Porter," 57.

enjoyed many excellent and profitable meetings with the many churches in England, holding before them the new revelation on the eternity of marriage.<sup>34</sup>

On the morning of March 3rd we cast anchor in Vigo Bay, Spain, after sailing 663 miles over the rough Bay of Biscay. This is a lovely bay, abounding with a variety of fish. Its borders abound with oranges, figs, grapes and nuts. Sixty-eight miles more and we pass Oporto, on the coast of Portugal. The next city was Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. It lies two miles up the Tagus River, and is very strongly fortified. The queen's palace and garden are worthy of attention; the remainder of the city is very filthy. On March 6th we left Lisbon and cast anchor in Cadiz Bay, Spain. We were now about 9,000 miles from our Utah home.

### **Letter 9: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, June 15, 1885<sup>35</sup>**

On the morning of March 8th, 1853, we were anchored under Gibraltar and heard the morning gun fired as the signal for opening the gates of the fortress, raising the drawbridges, lowering rope ladders and opening up the garrison generally.

The picturesqueness of the rock and garrison from the waters of the bay, especially when illuminated, on a dark night was a grand scene. The houses of both the north and south towns are terraced one above the other on the rock.<sup>36</sup>

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34. "While waiting for passage, we visited Portsmouth Dockyard and the Isle of Wight, and went on board the Duke of Wellington, a three decker of 131 guns, many of which were very heavy. This splendid ship is propelled by steam and sail, and has been the flag ship of the British fleet in the recent war with Russia. While on the Isle of Wight we were invited to preach in a sectarian chapel; the people were much taken up with our doctrine, not knowing that we were Mormon elders." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 1," 338–39.

35. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter IX, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (June 15, 1885): 191. Compare to Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 6," *Deseret News*, April 16, 1856, 42; and "Gibraltar Mission," *Millennial Star* 15 (April 23, 1853): 266–67.

36. "The morning was fair and beautiful. My feelings were peculiar as I gazed upon the stupendous rock of Gibraltar rising from the Mediterranean Sea to the height of 1400 feet. And was it strange to have those feelings, as it was not only the land of my birth, but the field of my future labors in the ministry?" Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 2," *Deseret News*, January 23, 1856, 366.

Small crafts soon placed us and our luggage on the rock. The guard was ordered to allow no one to pass the portals without proper credentials. One gentleman who was not prepared for this was turned away. My American passport<sup>37</sup> did not reach me at Liverpool as expected, and President Richards failed to influence the American consul and minister at London to supply the deficiency, and I was therefore in danger of being turned away. But strange to say, myself and companion passed into the garrison unchallenged, which afterwards surprised the officers.<sup>38</sup>

While passing along the narrow streets and sidewalks only paved with cobble stone, but scrupulously clean, and on seeing so many people of different nationalities, there being twelve different languages spoken by the people living here, we began to realize with what kind of a spirit we had to contend, and it produced peculiar emotions best known to those who feel the worth of souls and are placed in a strange land thousands of miles from home. It truly made us feel to put our trust in the Lord.

After getting something to eat we walked up to the summit of the rock and erected an altar of loose stone and dedicated ourselves and

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37. In the nineteenth century, passports were not as reliable as they are today, and government officials would often permit or forbid people based on subjective judgments, such as class distinctions. At this time, the population of Gibraltar was rapidly increasing, and the area's officials tried to confront the problem by limiting the number of foreigners who visited or lived there. Craig Robertson, *The Passport in America: The History of a Document* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 15; Stephen Constantine, *Community and Identity: The Making of Modern Gibraltar since 1704* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 93–131.

38. While on the ship *Iberia*, Elders Stevenson and Porter befriended a Mr. Willis, a resident of Gibraltar. Porter had this to say about how they got into Gibraltar without identification: "We disembarked with our friend Mr. Willis, he having ordered a conveyance to take him to his residence. He invited us to put our luggage in with his and accompany him to his home. We gladly accepted the invitation, and thus made our way into the garrison with our friend as a guide, which deluded the guards and sentinel at the gate from recognizing us as strangers from any foreign land or clime. So we were permitted to enter through the gate without any questions being asked as to our nativity, who we were or from whence we came, and so we were not under the necessity of obtaining a pass, which is required of all foreigners who wish admittance into the Fortress." Porter, "Record of Nathan Tanner Porter," 59–60.

the mission unto the Lord, and we were comforted.<sup>39</sup> The scenery from this spot was sublime. Spain lies to the north; Morocco on the coast of Africa, fifteen miles to the south; the Mediterranean on the east, and the straits and bay on the west. It was dusk when we wound our way down the rock to the town and secured lodgings at the house of a Spanish lady whose husband was a convict keeper.

On the Sabbath we visited the Methodist<sup>40</sup> church and were introduced to Rev. Mr. George Alton.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently we made an effort to

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39. Climbing mountains and dedicating the land for the preaching of the gospel was a common occurrence at the time. In September 1850, Lorenzo Snow and his companions climbed a mountain in Italy and there offered a prayer dedicating the land to the preaching of the gospel. In December 1850, the missionaries in Hawaii climbed a mountain near King's Falls, built a three-foot altar, and knelt in prayer to dedicate the land. Jesse Haven and his companions, who had been called on missions at the same 1852 meeting as Stevenson, climbed the mount called Lion's Head in South Africa in April 1853 to dedicate the area to receive their message; Elder Leonard I. Smith wanted to call the peak Mountain Brigham, Heber, and Willard for the First Presidency. James A. Toronto, "Italy," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, 556–58; R. Lanier Britsch, *Moramona: The Mormons in Hawaii* (Laie, Hi.: Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1989), 4–5; Farrell Ray Monson, "History of the South African Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1853–1970" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1971), 18–19.

40. Roman Catholicism eventually overtook Islam as the dominant religion of Gibraltar. Methodism, an eighteenth-century break-off from the Church of England, was planted in Gibraltar in 1769, when it was established by British soldiers. Missionaries and preachers for the movement were continually sent to the area in the ensuing years. A formal society was established on the Rock by the early 1800s, and the first official chapel was completed in 1810. Methodist schools were established in the 1830s, and many families, even non-Methodists, began sending their children to those schools, an action that concerned the Roman Catholic priests. The Methodist missionaries regarded these schools as an essential aspect of converting people, but most students remained or became Catholics. Methodism struggled against the Church of England, and missionaries to Spain fought against Catholicism, but Methodism retained a presence. Susan Irene Jackson, "Methodism in Gibraltar and Its Mission in Spain, 1769–1842" (PhD diss., University of Durham, 2000).

41. Reverend George Alton arrived in Gibraltar in 1847. In addition to overseeing his Methodist religion in Gibraltar, he also attempted to distribute tracts and Bibles in heavily Catholic Spain. By 1854, he was in charge of all Methodist work in Gibraltar and was able to negotiate the Methodist Church through clashes with the Anglican Church. In 1855, he relocated to Madrid to supervise the printing of Bibles but still oversaw Methodism in Gibraltar. He left Spain in 1856 because

obtain the chapel for the purpose of holding meeting, but our request was denied. My father helped to build this chapel and myself and two sisters and a brother were baptized therein.<sup>42</sup>

While looking for a hall in which to hold meetings, we were informed that a permit from the governor was necessary before either an indoor or outdoor meeting was held. On the 14th, we therefore wrote to this individual and solicited the privilege, which was given other ministers to hold religious services. We were referred to Sir George Aderly, colonial secretary.<sup>43</sup> With this person we had three interviews. While he was looking over Governor B[righam]. Young's letter of commendation, he said he had read of Brigham Young and his thirty wives.<sup>44</sup> During our last interview we were informed by him that we would have to appear before Stewart Henry Paget,<sup>45</sup> police magistrate, and prove our right to

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of social upheaval there and went back to England in 1858, but he returned to Gibraltar in 1862. Spain was still too intolerant of Protestants, so he spent most of his time in Gibraltar. During his second term in Gibraltar, he helped provide the community with clean water, and he thus helped diminish persecution against Methodism. Jackson, "Methodism in Gibraltar," 231–42.

42. "After meeting, being introduced to Mr. George Alton, Methodist missionary to this place, we desired the privilege to preach to the people from his pulpit, at some convenient time. After many equivocations and apologies, we got a positive denial in as polite a manner as his genteel manners could admit, although my father had been a leading member of this society, and myself and others of the family had been baptized." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 6," 42. Mormon missionaries often relied on the hospitality of other Christian clergy members for places of preaching and worship.

43. Sir George Adderley was a British colonial secretary in Gibraltar.

44. Although Mormon polygamy was not publicly announced until 1852, rumors of the practice had been circulating much earlier. In 1851, federally appointed officials to Utah Territory had encountered polygamy and published their grievances with the practice. Howard Stansbury and John Gunnison, who had been appointed to make a topographic survey of Utah, also published their observations on polygamy in 1852, but their report was much more positive than that of the officials. These reports gained significant attention in the public press. David J. Whittaker, "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1982; reprinted Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2003), 117–20.

45. Stewart Henry Paget came from a noble Welsh family and was appointed police magistrate in Gibraltar in March 1840. T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: A Short Biographical Dictionary of Welshmen Who Have Attained Distinction from the Earliest Times to the Present*, vol. 1 (Cardiff: Educational Publishing, 1908), 393; *Bulletins of State Intelligence*, *etc.* (Westminster: F. Watts, 1840), 127.

remain on the rock. And he expressed surprise at our being able to pass the sentinels unchallenged, etc.<sup>46</sup>

We obtained from Mr. [Horatio J.] Sprague,<sup>47</sup> American consul, a permit to visit on the rock for fifteen days in favor of Elder Porter,<sup>48</sup> and I had a certificate of birth and baptism from the Methodist mission. But Mr. Alton was very reluctant to give a certificate to me now that I had become a “Mormon.” I had quite a long dispute with him on the principles of the gospel.

We then went to the court room and the magistrate, after looking at my certificate, said, “You will be allowed, as native born to remain on the rock, but if caught preaching will be made a prisoner immediately. And you, Mr. Porter, by this permit will be allowed to remain fifteen days; your permit will not be renewed, and if you preach you will be cast

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46. “Called at two o'clock at secretary's office, where I was closely questioned. He wished to know if I was a Wesleyan minister or Church of England, &c. My reply was, that as I saw all religions tolerated, I did not expect to be questioned in this free country as to my religion. But I was neither ashamed of my religion, nor its name. I stated I was a minister of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This, he said, was new to him; upon which I showed him my papers, bearing Governor Young's name, with the territorial seal affixed; when I received considerable abuse, saying I did not come out in true colors, that Mormons was our true name; he had read about Mormons and Brigham Young and his thirty wives, &c. I then referred him to our true name on my papers, stating we were called by our enemies vulgarly Mormons, and also we were misrepresented by newspaper reports; but I found reason had but little impression.” Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 6,” *Deseret News*, 42.

47. Horatio J. Sprague was born in Gibraltar in 1823, and his father, Horatio Sprague, became the American consul there in 1832. Horatio J. became the consul in 1848, after his father's death. He served in that position until he died in 1901. “Oldest Consul Is Dead,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1901.

48. Laws were enacted in Gibraltar to combat the rising population, and even people visiting temporarily needed permits. Constantine, *Community and Identity*, 99.

Nathan Porter said the following about being allowed to stay: “In the mean time we were put under rigid examination as to our nationality, and as to how I, claiming to be a foreigner, came into the garrison without a pass. I explained that I was not so instructed nor so requested by the officer at the gate. That ended any further inquiry on that point. He said I would not be allowed to remain in the garrison without a permit. Brother Stevenson claimed to be citizen by birth, as he was born on the Rock. This he sustained by producing the certificate of his christening, obtained from the Methodist Church Record. I applied and obtained a permit to remain in the garrison fifteen days, not to be renewed was inserted.” Porter, “Record of Nathan Tanner Porter,” 60.



outside our gates.” We left some tracts in the police office and retired to our place of prayer on the top of the rock and offered our complaints to the Lord.<sup>49</sup>

We put out two hundred tracts in various parts of the garrison, and privately taught the people.

**Letter 10: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, July 1, 1885<sup>50</sup>**

The morning following our interview with the magistrate we took a walk out into Spain. We found the soil and climate producing oranges, figs, pomegranates, lemons, limes and a great variety of wild flowers; but the indolent Spaniards left nature to do most of the work. Many of them were living in huts similar to Indian *wickeups*. We could not but think that if Utah were favored with so good a climate and rich soil the huts would soon be supplanted by neat cottages and vineyards, and the land made almost like a paradise.

On our return to the lines we were told to call at the magistrate’s office. We did so and were informed that the governor had given our letter to him (the magistrate) and that we need expect no aid in spreading “Mormonism” in that stronghold. We were warned to be careful and look out what we were about.<sup>51</sup>

We again called on the American consul, claiming protection for Elder Porter, whose permit was about to expire. He promised to see the magistrate and do all he could for him. On April 1st we called on the American consul, who had just returned from the police station, holding a card in his hand on which were printed our articles of faith. He said, holding up the card and speaking to Elder Porter, “This is the only cause against you,

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49. “We then proceeded up to the summit of the rock, to our private retreat, which was named Mount Edward, and entered our complaints to a much higher court, and asked the Lord not to do as vile man had done to reject us, but to guide us by the light of his Spirit. After being thus refreshed, we returned to our lonely room, as we had hired a small room for two dollars a month.” Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 6,” 42.

50. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter X, Missionary Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (July 1, 1885): 196. Compare to Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7,” *Deseret News*, April 30, 1856, 63.

51. “On our return I was invited to call at the police office, as the magistrate wished to see me; a few minutes after we passed the last sentry, a messenger left word for us. This plainly shows our movements are closely watched and known, for no one knew where we were going, except ourselves.” Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7,” 63.

and if Stevenson does not look out he will have to share the same fate as you, although he is a native. Your religion is not wanted here. You have already created jealousy in the churches.”<sup>52</sup> He then advised us both to leave the garrison.<sup>53</sup>

Elder Porter’s permit being now exhausted a passage was secured for him on a steam packet;<sup>54</sup> but, according to a dream that we had, I was

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52. Elder Porter recorded this dialogue with the consul: “As I entered the Consul’s office he arose from his seat and saying, ‘Well, I was just going to see the Chief Magistrate. Please sit down. I will be back in a few minutes.’ He left having but a few yards to go. He soon returned, and on entering the door held up a pamphlet in his hand saying, ‘This is the reason you are not permitted to stay. You have been distributing tracts, and thus caused disturbance among the churches.’

“‘Ah, indeed’ says I, ‘I was not aware that there was a law prohibiting the distribution of religious tracts and references to the Holy Scriptures. Please, is there such law?’

“‘His countenance dropped with the reply, ‘No, not that I am aware of.’

“‘And is there any precedent to this charge? Has any person or persons been prohibited from such distribution?’

“‘No sir, not that I am aware of.’

“‘Then sir, why is this brought against me as a charge?’ I looked him straight in the eyes.

“‘He replied, ‘You know what it is.’

“‘Yes’ says I, ‘you mean to say it is religious prejudice.’

“‘Yes’ says he, ‘that is it. The governor consults the ministers and favors them against any thing prejudicial to their welfare religiously.’” Porter, “Record of Nathan Tanner Porter,” 62–63.

53. “As I was passing the garrison library, also the sappers library [for British engineers], those tracts I had left was handed me, saying the clergymen had decided they were a nuisance to the library, and would not be allowed to remain. Many who were formerly friends began to look suspiciously upon us, and treat us with disdain, saying we were Mormons and deceived, but always failed to show us wherein, only the learned ministers said we were wrong, and the old apostolic gospel was no longer needed.” Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7,” 63.

54. Nathan Porter recorded his final moments in Gibraltar: “Brother Stevenson accompanied me to the side of the steamer where we shook the parting hand under circumstances to us very trying. We commended each other to God, trusting that in his providence we would meet again in due time. I watched his return to the shore to enter again that forbidding Fortress, whose rulers had rejected us and forbid our testimony being sounded in her halls or on the corners of her streets. This was the 1st day of April 1853. They doubtless thought we were both leaving their quarters, but were April Fooled when they saw him again within the walls.” The Mormon elders seemed to relish the

to remain and establish the gospel.<sup>55</sup> I immediately went to our place of prayer on the mountain, and while I gazed on my only friend steaming out of the bay up the straits I had rather strange feelings.<sup>56</sup>

Previous to leaving England I was pointed out in a meeting as having been seen in a vision doing a good work in Gibraltar, but was told that I would meet heavy opposition in my labors. I was seen to be baptizing some persons, and heavenly messengers were seen to deliver me from the hands of the wicked.

A Mr. Elliot, who had been reading the Book of Mormon and was inclined to believe my testimony, became prejudiced by the ministers and turned me away from his door. Shortly afterwards he fell twenty feet, broke his leg and otherwise injured his body, which kept him in bed for forty days.

I visited the Jewish synagogue one day in company with a Mr. Delemar, a learned Jew who spoke six la[n]guages. He instructed me to wear my hat in the meeting as it was customary with them so to do. The pulpit was in the center. The ark, in one end of the building, being opened the parchment was taken out. It was rolled on two sticks with bells on the top of them. It was passed around the synagogue and kissed by the worshippers, while a continuous chanting was being kept up by the congregation. A portion was read from the pulpit, contributions were received and then the rolls were returned to the ark, each person bowing in that direction. Meeting was then dismissed.

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opportunity to deceive the local authorities, given how they had both been treated and one expelled from the British colony. Elder Porter then labored as a missionary in England from 1853 to 1856. Porter, "Record of Nathan Tanner Porter," 63–67.

55. "Finding no other resort but the fulfillment of the manifestations we previously had, which was—Elder Porter would have to go, and I remain alone to establish the work we came to perform, I found a passage home to England for Elder Porter, by paying 20 dollars, which had been previously given me, and I much required to sustain myself." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7," 63.

56. "After taking the parting hand of my only friend on the rock, I retired to Mount Edward to our secret closet, where I saw the last of the steamer bearing my partner away, being troubled concerning his comfort, as he only had a deck passage; but I afterwards learned that the Lord opened the hearts of the officers, who gave him second cabin fare. Truly peculiar were my feelings while I gazed upon the scenes below—the various places of worship, from the Mahomedan and Jew to the various Protestants, not omitting the old mother of all (Catholics)." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7," 63.

On the 4th of May I visited the steam packet that brought me to the place, left a Book of Mormon and other reading matter with the clerk and got my mail. As it was raining I sat, by permission, under the porch of a guard house, reading the *Millennial Star*. Several persons became interested in me and asked questions about my belief. Soon an officer stepped up and inquired if I was a Methodist; but as soon as he learned that I was a Latter-day Saint he ordered me put under guard, saying that my religion was one that could not be tolerated in that place. For the first time in my life I was marched into the guard house a prisoner. I there began preaching to the guard, who listened attentively to what I had to say. After some few inquiries concerning what I had been doing in the fortress I was released, and I subsequently sold some books to one of the guard who arrested me, but whose sympathies were aroused in my behalf.

On the 24th of May, the queen's birth-day, there was a grand celebration. The soldiers were marched to the north front, outside of the gates of the fortress. After considerable exercising of the soldiers the firing of cannon commenced from the top of the rock, 1,400 feet high, after which the galleries opened fire about half-way down the rock. Singular, indeed, was it to see fire and smoke gushing out of the perpendicular rock. The shipping in the bay was beautifully decorated with the flags of all nations.

June the 28th was a happy day for me, for at 4 o'clock, a. m., just after gun fire, as per previous arrangement, I met John McCall, a dock-yard policeman, and Thomas Miller, a gunner and driver of the royal artillery,<sup>57</sup> at the water's edge, we having descended a rope ladder to the shore, and baptized them.<sup>58</sup> These were the first fruits of my labors after being on the rock three months and twenty days.

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57. Stevenson's journal identifies John McCall as "Elexander" McCall, a native of Scotland. Thomas Miller was born in February 1817 in county Donegal, Ireland. John McCall often did not attend Latter-day Saint meetings because his employer threatened to fire him if he did so, but he still believed the gospel. Stevenson, *Diary*, March 26, 1854, and table after the March 29, 1854, entry. "These being the first baptized on the rock, after nearly four months' toil, it gave me much joy to open the first furrow in this land of opposition, which has cost me much arduous toil and abuse. In the evening I held a private meeting, and confirmed those baptized at brother Miller's house; his wife and three sons were quite believing." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7," 63.

58. "It is impossible to get to the water in the night, and with difficulty even in the day, where I baptized them privately, but came so near being discovered, that while I stood in the water I saw the guard's hat." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7," 63.

The Lord only knows the many privations and sacrifices I endured and the lonely hours I spent, living many weeks on the value of three to five cents per day.

**Letter 11: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, July 15, 1885<sup>59</sup>**

In the evening of the 28th of June we held a private meeting at the house of Brother Miller. We confirmed the two persons just baptized, and subsequently baptized and blessed some children of this same family.

Soon after this, while distributing tracts, I offered one to the attorney-general and received abuse in return. I also sent a second tract to Rev. Mr. Hambelton, by the hand of his servant. The minister soon returned it in person, throwing it abruptly at me, saying, "We belong to the established church and have no use for your tracts."

I soon found that the priests not only ruled the people but influenced the governor and chief authorities; and in consequence of this influence a card was placed on the door of the barracks which read as follows: "An individual named Stevenson, a Mormonite preacher, is not allowed in the barracks." This was shown to me upon one occasion as I was being marched out of the barracks, although the guard expressed sympathy for me and considered this act as base persecution.

With all this, however, they were not satisfied, but got up the following summons, which was handed me by one of the police:

"CITY GARRISON AND TERRITORY OF GIBRALTAR.  
To Edward Stevenson, of Gibraltar:

You are hereby required to personally appear before me, Stewart Henry Paget, or any other of her majesty's justices of the peace, in and for the said city garrison and territory, at the police office, on the 30th day of September, 1853, at the hour of eleven in the forenoon of the same day, to answer to the complaint of James McPherson, charging that you have used words profanedly, scoffing the holy scriptures, and exposing part of them to contempt and ridicule. Dated this 29th day of September, 1853."

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59. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter XI, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (July 15, 1885): 215. Compare to Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 7," 63; Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 8," *Deseret News*, May 28, 1856, 93; "Foreign Intelligence," *Millennial Star* 15 (December 24, 1853): 841-42; "The Gibraltar Mission," *Millennial Star* 16 (March 18, 1854): 174-75.

I was afterwards informed that the complainant was expecting a handsome reward if he got me into trouble. On one occasion I overheard the magistrate who issued the summons say to some ladies that he hoped soon to see me in the stocks.<sup>60</sup>

On the 30th I repaired to the police office. Just before going into court I had the pleasure of bearing my testimony to about fifteen persons, until prohibited by the police. I soon faced my plaintiff, and one good look in his face unnerved him. The following colloquy occurred in the court room:

“Do you know the defendant?”

“Yes, sir.”

“When was your first acquaintance with him?”

“Soon after he came here.”

“What, did he then give you those books?” (holding up some books I had sold the plaintiff and for which he failed to pay me.) “Did he wish you to change your religion?”

“Yes, he said I ought to be baptized.”

“In what way did he want you to be baptized?”

“By immersion all over in the water.”

“Did he speak against the established religion?”

“He said sprinkling little children was not right, as they were not old enough to judge for themselves—they were not accountable.”

“Is this all he said?”

“His books say all the churches sprang from the mother of harlots—the abominable Catholic church.”

“Can you find it? [”]

My books—the Book of Mormon, *Voice of Warning*<sup>61</sup> and some tracts—were then opened. I now availed myself of the opportunity of

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60. “Several were paying attention to my teachings, for I had sold about 40 dollars worth of books, and privately taught a great many, and as some sheep were about to be caught, the wolves in sheep’s clothing began to howl.” Stevenson, “Gibralter Mission, Letter No. 7” 63.

61. *A Voice of Warning* was a missionary tract written in 1837 by Parley P. Pratt. It was one of the most influential missionary tracts of the nineteenth century and gave a comprehensive overview of Mormon beliefs, including the fulfillment of prophecy, the Book of Mormon, and the Resurrection. David Rolph Seely, “*Voice of Warning*,” in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, 1301; Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons* (New York: W. Sandford, 1837).

opening my Bible at the 17th chapter of Revelation, where it speaks of the mother of harlots. After the judge looked over the text for a short time he remarked, "Oh, this is the Bible."

"Yes, sir," I answered, "all our quotations are from the Bible."

Many officers and spectators began to think that this was a singular way of scoffing at the holy scriptures. The questioning of the plaintiff then continued:

"Did he perform baptism on you?"

"No, but he did on a dockyard policeman and a gunner and driver of the royal artillery."

I was still looking at my Bible, when I was asked, "Do you hear, sir?"

"Yes, sir, all that is said," I replied.

It was then stated that I ought to give bonds to not speak to the military at all, and a bond with penalty was prepared. I was not allowed a defense, neither did they examine other witnesses who had been subpoenaed, as they found their evidence would be in my favor. On my refusal to sign a bond I was taken by the police as a prisoner into the prison room. Soon afterwards the officer came into the room and compromised the bonding by running his pen through some of the lines, rendering it as useless as a blank piece of paper. So to accommodate them I signed it and went on my way.<sup>62</sup> I soon baptized several persons, among whom was a woman who had held me on her knee when I was a child.<sup>63</sup> I organized a branch of the Church.

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62. "I left my testimony of the gospel with them, also the Book of Mormon, Voice of Warning, and my official documents. The clerk soon followed and was willing to modify the bond, so that it did not materially interfere with my rights; when I signed it, and was set at liberty with a threat that I probably would be indicted for baptizing persons by immersion.

"Corporal McDonald, who I have previously mentioned received a summons to appear as a witness against me, was at court, but was not called upon as he previously had to appear at his orderly room, where it was ascertained his testimony would be in my favor. This man I soon after baptized. Distributed some tracts and returned to my quiet home, and held a private meeting in the evening, where I sold some books.

"This difficulty, although designed for evil, resulted in raising friends." Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 8," 93.

63. An unpublished autobiography by Stevenson identifies a Mrs. Norton as the woman who "dandled me on her knee." The name "Norton" is not in the list of members of the Gibraltar branch that Stevenson put in his journal, so either he did not record her baptism, or else there was a scribal error and Norton was not her actual name. Stevenson, "Life of Edward Stevenson," 5;

**Letter 12: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, August 1, 1885<sup>64</sup>**

Soon after my arrival in Gibraltar, a Mr. Smith invited me to take dinner with him, at which time he wept with joy for the pleasure it gave him, to eat with a son of one with whom he had enjoyed himself many times over twenty-six years before, in the good, old Methodist church. “Why,” said he, “your father helped build our good, old church; and used to play the bass viol in the choir, too. Yes, and he sold his property to me for one hundred dollars less than its real value. Can it be possible that you, a minister so well-versed in the good old Bible, the blessed Bible, have come back to us all the way from the land of America—a son of my good old Christian friend, Joseph Stephenson! It seems like a dream. You will doubtless preach for us in the church your good, old Christian father helped to build.”

“Yes, Father Smith,” I replied, “I am truly his son, and have come from Utah—over 8,000 miles away from my home, about one-third of the way around this world we now occupy. I have left my dear family, and have come as a true minister of the everlasting gospel of Jesus, as did His ancient disciples of old—without purse or scrip.<sup>65</sup> And I assure you Father Smith, it would afford me the greatest pleasure to have the privilege of speaking to my friends in the meeting house where memories arise like green spots in a desert, afresh in my memory, of the good things and favorable impressions made on my mind at the Sabbath schools I used to attend twenty-six years ago. I can well remember the time, although only seven years old, when my mother used to put on my white pinafore, and nicely blackened shoes, and my father bowed down and prayed to the Lord in that house he sold you. I feel to bless them for

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Edward Stevenson, “The Life and History of Elder Edward Stevenson,” 2, MS 1054, Church History Library.

64. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter XII, Missionary Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (August 1, 1885): 229. Compare to Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 9,” *Deseret News*, June 18, 1856, 118; and Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 10,” *Deseret News*, July 23, 1856, 155.

65. Following Jesus’s New Testament injunction to preach without purse or scrip, Mormon missionaries in the nineteenth century were instructed to travel without money. They relied on the generosity of local Saints and strangers for their meals and lodging. This practice required great faith, both on the part of the missionaries and on those who helped them. This method of preaching was abandoned with changing times. Richard L. Jensen, “Without Purse or Scrip? Financing Latter-day Saint Missionary Work in Europe in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 3–14.



setting my feet in my youthful days in a Christian life and for the good that I received in this Sabbath school. But my father now sleeps with those who have passed behind the veil, he died when I was but eleven years of age.

“At the age of thirteen, I heard Joseph Smith, the Prophet, preach by the power of the Holy Ghost. He related the heavenly vision with which he was favored;<sup>66</sup> I had a witness of the truth that he had told, although I was not baptized until some time later.

“I will now relate to you a vision I had. I saw in a very nice, green spot every one who had joined this new Church. They were all dressed in white robes. A messenger, and the only stranger to me, stood by my side. I was the only one who was without the snow-white robe, and this very much amazed me. I asked why this was so, he replied, ‘Look! do you see one here who has not been baptized or come in at the door?’

“But I believe as well as do those.”

“‘You have not yet come in at the door!’”

“This was sufficient for me. I was soon baptized, and was made to rejoice with a testimony of the message which has brought me to this far-off land.

“Many old friends have received and treated me courteously, but the minister not only closed the church doors against me, but himself and some of his co-religionists began to circulate many falsehoods against the truth of the gospel, and the love of many waxed cold.”

I thus bore my testimony to the truth, but my father’s good old friend closed his house against me and turned as cool as he was warm at first. He became abusive to the servants of God. I told him the consequence of his rejecting the light that he had already acknowledged, and for turning me—a servant of God, from his door, and that the hand of the Lord would speedily follow him to his sorrow.

His wife was reading the Book of Mormon privately, and was with some of the children believing. It was but a short time before Father Smith was stricken and was confined not only to his house, but to his bed. Some time after his wife called my attention to his condition and humiliation. He was not expected to live. Soon after he desired to see me

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66. Edward Stevenson heard Joseph Smith speak in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1834. “The Prophet testified with great power concerning the visit of the Father and the Son, and the conversation he had with them.” Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: By the author, 1893), 4.

and said if the Lord would only spare his life, he would serve Him better than he ever had done.

I told him that the Lord brought down and raised up; that if he desired to recover and serve Him faithfully, he should get well and the Lord would raise him up to better health. In a few days I was invited to take dinner with him and pray with the family. He was up and around reading, and a very great change had come to him and his house. He was, however, too good to endure, and he shortly burned up some copies of the Church paper and pamphlets, and forbade me to enter his house again. I of course left my testimony, telling him the consequences of his actions. I told him it would now be worse than ever with him. The poor man was very soon again confined to his bed, but not long this time, for he soon died. His family decided to go to England where they said they intended to obey the gospel.

On the 23rd of January, 1854, I had the pleasure of organizing a branch of the Church consisting of ten members, ordaining one Elder and one Priest. We partook of the sacrament and had a joyful time.<sup>67</sup> The branch was named Rock Port Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>68</sup>

### **Letter 13: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, August 15, 1885<sup>69</sup>**

There was a well-to[-]do free citizen on the rock, a former acquaintance of my childhood, and a great friend of my father when he lived on the stronghold of Gibraltar, whose name was Gilchrist. He was a Methodist, and I had taken considerable pains to inform him concerning our

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67. John McLean was ordained an elder, and Thomas Forbes was ordained a priest. Stevenson, "Gibraltar Mission, Letter No. 10," 155; Stevenson, Diary, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

68. See confirmation of this branch in Ralph L. Cottrell Jr., "A History of the Discontinued Mediterranean Missions of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1963), 62–63; see also, for example, Stevenson, Diary, January 29, 1854.

During the nineteenth century, assigned elders in the far-flung corners of the world were empowered to organize or "plant" branch units within their geographic stewardships by virtue of their priesthood authority with little Church headquarters oversight. Stevenson informed the president of the overarching European Mission of his activities leading the Rock Port Branch, including officiating in priesthood ordinances and ministering to its members.

69. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter XIII, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (August 15, 1885): 252.

doctrines and had furnished him with a Book of Mormon, Voice of Warning and other books and tracts. He became convinced that sprinkling children was only man's theory and not consistent with Bible doctrine, as Jesus and the disciples taught the people to first believe and repent and then be baptized, not to be baptized and afterwards believe and repent. Mr. Gilchrist acknowledged that I taught the truth, yet he turned me away from his house and was, therefore, more culpable.

At his own request I went to his house one day and taught him for two hours, the principles of the gospel. During this time he was called twice to dinner, but he did not go himself, nor did he ask me to partake of a meal, although he was well aware of the meagre diet to which I was compelled to accustom myself.

It appeared to me that he was convinced of the truth of the message that I bore, but was not sufficiently honest to receive it. Finally, as I was leaving him, he offered me fifty cents, saying at the same time that it was not to help me in spreading the imposture, but for my personal use. I told him that I was preaching without purse or scrip, but was unwilling to receive gifts only in the name of a disciple. I returned not again to that house.

At the same time that I was teaching Mr. Gilchrist I was laboring with a soldier named Thomas McDonald, and though he received no more instruction than the former, he accepted the truth and was baptized.<sup>70</sup> One night, he said, after he had retired to rest, he had a dream and a messenger whose hair was nearly white, appeared to him. This searcher after truth then asked his visitor about the Book of Mormon, as they had been talking about that record. It was opened and the messenger simply said, "How plain it is, is it not?"

In the dream he also saw me tired and weary, but hard at work digging the ground. He touched me and asked what I was doing, when I replied that I intended to sow seed and if possible reap a harvest of souls.

This man was the means of bringing several other soldiers of his regiment into the Church.

There was a painful incident came under my observation about this time that I will here just mention: One day I had as usual a parcel of books in my arm and was visiting and teaching wherever I could meet anyone who would listen to my remarks. I called at a shoe shop in the southern part of the rock where I found six men engaged at shoe making.

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70. Thomas McDonald, born in Scotland in 1828, was baptized November 19, 1853. Stevenson, *Diary*, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

After telling them the object of my visit and giving them some tracts I opened the book of Doctrine and Covenants where it speaks of the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, and read this aloud to the workmen.<sup>71</sup> As I finished reading everything was for a moment as still as death everyone present having ceased to work. In a moment one of the six broke out in an ungovernable rage, saying, “Joe Smith was served just right and ought to have been killed long before he was.”

My reasoning with him only served to enrage him more, and his closing remark to me was, “Joe Smith ought to have been cut up into mince-meat.”

I gathered up my books and said to him that he was guilty of shedding innocent blood inasmuch as he consented to it in his heart, for which cause the wrath of God would rest upon him, and he should feel His power to the consuming of his body, and that too, in a very short time. He would then know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God and that I was a servant of the Almighty.

On the following day he with the others came to his work as usual, but he had not been there long before he began vomiting blood, and before he could be carried to the hospital he was dead. Just before dying he said to his fellow-workmen, “I wrongfully abused that man yesterday.”

Thus did the judgment of God speedily follow him.

#### **Letter 14: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, September 1, 1885<sup>72</sup>**

Soon after organizing a branch of the Church there was quite an agitation regarding the war in the Crimea, England, France and Turkey were allies in a war against Russia,<sup>73</sup> or in the words of Daniel the prophet, the king of the north, (Russia), was arrayed against the king of the

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71. Doctrine and Covenants 135.

72. Edward Stevenson, “Gibraltar, Letter XIV, Missionary Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (September 1, 1885): 262.

73. The Crimean War began in 1853, when Russia tried to take over land from the Ottoman Empire, in part so they could have access to the Black Sea. The United Kingdom objected to this, so it and France joined Turkey in fighting against Russia. Most of the fighting occurred in the Crimean Peninsula, and many soldiers died from disease rather than from fighting. In 1856, all countries involved were tired of fighting, so they signed the Treaty of Paris, which created some compromises, including making the Black Sea a neutral zone. Zachary R. Jones, “Wars and Rumors of Wars’: United Kingdom Latter-day Saints and the Crimean War, 1853–1856,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 14 (Spring 2013): 30;

south, (Turkey).<sup>74</sup> All this had a tendency to militate against my labors as a missionary in the military garrison of Gibraltar, for the British lion's interests were assailed, and all of its military had war on the brain, which generally has far more effect on the human mind than the spirit of the gospel of peace.

The elder John McLain,<sup>75</sup> Corporal Hays<sup>76</sup> and John McDonald,<sup>77</sup> all in the branch just organized, were likely to go on the Mediterranean sea to be engaged in the Crimean war, and the Priest, Sergeant Thomas Forbes,<sup>78</sup> was about to go to Scotland, thus depleting my hard earned little branch, which had a tendency to discourage me in my efforts, if such is possible to a Latter-day Saint Elder engaged in so great a work as saving human souls.

I concluded, however, once more to apply to the governor for liberty to open up a public place of worship, and sent him the following letter:

"GIBRALTAR, April 24th, 1854.

"To his excellency, Sir Robert William Gardiner,<sup>79</sup> Governor of Gibraltar:

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Harold Temperley, "The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution," *Journal of Modern History* 4 (September 1932): 387–414.

74. Daniel 11 is a prophecy that says that a king from the north and a king from the south would fight against each other.

75. John McLean was baptized on January 6, 1854, and became the president of the LDS Expeditionary Force Branch in Turkey. His division fought in the Battle of Inkerman in November 1854, in which he was wounded by a bayonet. He attempted to preach to fellow soldiers in the war and was mainly unsuccessful, but there were a few converts. Jones, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," 32–34; Wilford Hill LeCheminant, "A Valiant Little Band: LDS Soldiers in the Crimean War," *Ensign* 11 (January 1981): 20–21; Stevenson, *Diary*, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

76. Corporal Peter Hays, born in Scotland in 1827, was baptized February 3, 1854. He was part of John McLean's regiment, and in the Battle of Inkerman, he received a wound that required his arm to be amputated above the elbow. Jones, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," 33; LeCheminant, "Valiant Little Band," 20; Stevenson, *Diary*, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

77. The "John McDonald" mentioned here is probably Thomas McDonald. McDonald was hurt three times in one day during the Battle of Inkerman. He had artillery shells explode near him on two separate occasions, catapulting debris against him, and a bullet hit his hand on another occasion. Jones, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," 33; LeCheminant, "Valiant Little Band," 20.

78. Thomas Forbes was baptized on November 15, 1853. Stevenson, *Diary*, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

79. Sir Robert William Gardiner was born in 1781. He served as Gibraltar's governor from 1848 to 1855, but he had previously been in Gibraltar from 1797 to 1798 as part of Britain's Royal Artillery. He died in 1864. James Alex Browne,

The undersigned, an inhabitant of Gibraltar most respectfully solicits an audience with his excellency, on business of importance. I have the honor to be,

“Your most obedient servant,  
“EDWARD STEVENSON.”

The next day I received the following:

“The Colonial secretary requests that Mr. E. Stevenson will call at his office at 12 o'clock to-day.

“Secretary's Office,  
“Gibraltar April 25th, 1854.”

I responded to the request and had a favorable reception. The colonial secretary said my case should be duly laid before his excellency, and a reply forwarded to my address.

I was visiting at this time a Prussian whom I had been teaching the gospel, inducing him to read some of our tracts and then compare our doctrines with those taught in the Bible. He was apparently convinced of the truth. I also had some Spaniards investigating our doctrines, and it was manifest to me that if I could obtain permission to open a public place of worship my chances would be increased to spread the gospel among the people.

The Methodists had been making an effort to introduce their gospel into Spain by opening a school there, but as soon as it was ascertained by the inhabitants, who are mostly Catholics, that they were tampering with their religion the innovators had to flee by night out of the country.

I received a very pleasing reply to my letter to the governor through the colonial secretary, Mr. Aderly [Adderley], and therein consent was given me to open a place for public worship. The secretary, however, stated that this garrison was a hard place for religious teachers for a Catholic once had a cat thrown at him while he was holding service. I merely stated that all I expected was the protection of the law.

Subsequently with the assistance of some friends I found a suitable place and began to hold meetings. One evening when I had a few friends in my private room a policeman came with a message for me to appear at the colonial secretary's office on the following day. My reply was that if the secretary had any business with me he would do well to

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*England's Artillerymen. An Historical Narrative of the Services of the Royal Artillery, from the Formation of the Regiment to the Amalgamation of the Royal and Indian Artilleries in 1862* (London: Hall, Smart, and Allen, 1865), 69–72.

officially notify me of it, otherwise, I would not notice their bidding. The next day I received from the colonial secretary a very polite invitation to visit him at 2 p. m. the next day on business of importance, and to my own interest.

**Letter 15: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, September 15, 1885<sup>80</sup>**

On May 1, 1854, my thirty-fourth birthday, Elder John McLean, Brothers Thomas McDonald and Peter Hays, with their regiment, 1,000 rank and file, marched on board of one of her majesty's men-of-war to sail up the Mediterranean sea and take part in the Crimea war. In the midst of thundering shouts of enthusiasm the gallant ship with her precious burden of souls steamed out of the beautiful bay of Gibraltar to do honor to Briton's flag. A solemn reflection crossed my mind on this occasion with a mental question, who of this one thousand will ever return home again to fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or wives?

Many tears were shed over the wounded and slain during this cruel war, which lasted about two years.<sup>81</sup> My blessings went with the brave boys in red, especially the three brethren mentioned. These were instructed to remember their prayers as they were in the hands of the Lord who could protect them even in the hour of fierce battle, and also to use their influence to spread the gospel among their comrades. A subsequent letter brought news that Elder McLean had organized a branch of the Church in a Turkish burying ground, and while doing so, bottles and other missiles were thrown at him and his companions. The branch was named the Expeditionary Force Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>82</sup>

Frequent letters revealed many of the horrors of warfare, such as being compelled to lie in the trenches before Sebastapool, in a mass of filth and vermin with no one to prepare them a change of linen. Elder McLean stated that he had been in the heavy charges at the battle of Inkerman

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80. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter XV, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (September 15, 1885): 279.

81. It has been estimated that around 750,000 people died during the Crimean War, either from combat or disease. It is unknown how many total Latter-day Saints fought in the Crimean War, but John McLean's Expeditionary Force Branch apparently decreased from twenty-three members to twelve or thirteen, and others died in other branches. Jones, "Wars and Rumors of Wars," 30–34.

82. LeCheminant, "Valiant Little Band," 18–21.

and Alma.<sup>83</sup> So pressed was the charge from both sides that the soldiers were crushed together and faced each other with crossed bayonets being unable to use them for some time. He, however, came out with only a slight bayonet wound in the arm which only kept him from duty five days. Brother McDonald was wounded by the bursting of a shell, but with his handkerchief bound up his head and continued the encounter until another shell burst close by and this time disabled him so that he was taken from the field, but soon recovered. Corporal Hays lost his arm, but his life was spared; so the lives of all three of the brethren were spared, while often the ground was strewn with the dead and dying. Thus, even in this war, the hand of the Lord was plainly seen and acknowledged.

**Letter 16: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, October 1, 1885<sup>84</sup>**

Soon after receiving permission from the governor to open a public place of worship, I was called upon at my residence by a policeman, and requested to call at the secretary's office. This I refused to do without being notified officially. Soon afterwards I received a polite official notice, which I answered on the following day. I was informed by the secretary that the governor had reconsidered the matter of my holding meetings and had concluded that I should neither preach nor hold meetings. It was a time of war, and he would not allow a new religion to be introduced on the rock of Gibraltar; and if an attempt to do so should be made I would be taken up by the police.

When I took into consideration that several of the brethren I had baptized upon the rock had gone into the Russian war, and that two others were about to go to Great Britain and the spirit of war that prevailed in the garrison, I felt impressed to ask the governor for a free passage to England, which, through the colonial secretary, was cheerfully granted, as I had already learned that the governor had expressed

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83. The Battle of Alma, one of the earliest battles in the Crimean War, occurred in September 1854 at the Alma River in southwest Crimea, when French and British troops defeated the Russian troops, even though the Russians had the advantage of a higher elevation. After the Battle of Alma, the French and British decided not to attack the weakened city of Sevastopol, instead putting it under siege. In November 1854, Russian troops attacked the French and British outside of Sevastopol. The Russians had the advantage of fog and numbers, but they still lost the battle. Patrick Mercer, *Inkerman 1854: The Soldiers' Battle* (London: Osprey, 1998).

84. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter [XVI], Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (October 1, 1885): 297.



himself willing to give me a free passage on one of her majesty's mail packets, in order to get rid of one who had stirred up so much of a religious excitement.

As I could take my departure at pleasure, the steam packets plying twice a week between that point and England, some twelve hundred miles, I at once began prep[ar]ations to leave the few remaining Saints under the care of a proper officer. To my surprise I was again called to the colonial secretary's office, and after going through the inquisition, because I would not compromise principle, my free passage was re[s]cinded, and I was left to depend upon the Lord to open up my way. A saying of the Savior, while instructing His disciples came into my mind:

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Where-withal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek): for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (*Matt.* 6[::]28).

I repaired to the open sea, where I had baptized the first members of the branch, and there washed my feet and cleansed my garments as a witness before God against the cruel authorities of this strong garrison; and felt to rejoice that I was counted worthy to be cast out for the gospel's sake.<sup>85</sup>

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85. In the New Testament, Jesus instructed his followers to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against the people or places that rejected them (see, for example, Mark 6:11). Some scriptural references also involved the prophets shaking their garments for similar purposes (see Acts 18:6 or 2 Ne. 9:44). In the nineteenth century, many missionaries washed their feet against the people who rejected them, and the rite functioned as a curse. In the twentieth century, this practice faded out and was generally discouraged. Samuel R. Weber, “Shake Off the Dust of Thy Feet’: The Rise and Fall of Mormon Ritual Cursing,” *Dialogue* 46 (Spring 2013): 108–39; Daniel L. Belnap, “‘Those Who Receive You Not’: The Rite of Wiping Dust off the Feet,” *International Journal of Mormon Studies* 5 (2012): 81–127.

You can, perhaps imagine my condition, over eight thousand miles from home, on a little island of only three miles by one half of a mile in size, without purse or scrip and almost friendless.

**Letter 17: Edward Stevenson to George Q. Cannon, November 15, 1885<sup>86</sup>**

One night, after retiring to my bed for rest, it was made known to me by vision that my mission on the rock was fulfilled acceptably before the Lord, and I saw a scourge come upon the place soon after my departure, for it appeared to me that I was sailing out of the lovely Bay of Gibraltar on one of her majesty's elegant steam packets.

A short time after I had this vision shown to me I received a letter from a Mr. Lambel, a resident of Libson [*sic*], the capital of Portugal. In his communication, Mr. Lambel informed me of the serious illness of his brother-in-law. The doctors had given him up, as it was out of their power to effect a cure. He further stated that he and his family had read a great deal about the Latter-day Saints, and had learned of their faith in the ordinances of the gospel; and by communications from England he had been told of my mission to Gibraltar. He desired me to go to Lisbon and anoint with oil, and pray for this sick man, as they fully believed in the healing of the sick by the laying on of hands, as was customary among the ancient saints of which the Bible tells us.<sup>87</sup> The gentleman furnished me nine pounds English money, with which to pay my passage to Lisbon and return, which was equal to a full fare from Gibraltar to Southampton, England.

Thus was my deliverance brought about. After the governor's unfaithfulness to fulfill his promise, the Lord opened up my way to accomplish what was shown to me by vision. This incident teaches us the lesson that the Lord is good and kind to all who put their trust in Him.<sup>88</sup>

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86. Edward Stevenson, "Gibraltar, Letter XVII, Missionary Experience," *Juvenile Instructor* 20 (November 15, 1885): 339.

87. James 5:14 in the New Testament says, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." This is practiced in the Church today, when elders place oil on the head of the sick, put their hands on the afflicted's head, and offer a blessing, similar to a prayer. Bruce B. Clark, "Blessings," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:129.

88. Stevenson wrote a few additional letters after he returned to England and America: "Foreign Intelligence," *Millennial Star* 16 (July 22, 1854): 457-58; and Edward Stevenson to Brigham Young, July 5, 1854, published as "Mission at Gibraltar," *Deseret News*, September 14, 1854, n.p.

## Appendix: Rock Port (Gibraltar) Branch Membership Table

This is a list of the people that Stevenson recorded in his journal<sup>89</sup> as members of the “Gibraltar Branch.” Spellings have been corrected when possible. Stevenson included the parishes where the individuals were born, but because they were often misspelled and are not easily found today, they have not been included in this list. Very little is known about these British members, including whether they immigrated to Utah or not, although tens of thousands of other British converts did gather to Zion from other British colonies around the world during the mid-1850s.

Edward Stevenson, born May 1, 1820, in Gibraltar; baptized in 1834 by Japheth Fosdick; held office of seventy; president of the branch.

John (“Elexander”) McCall, born in Scotland; baptized June 28, 1853, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

Thomas Miller, born in February 1817 in Charlemont, county Donegal, Ireland; baptized June 28, 1853, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch. Stevenson blessed three of Thomas Miller’s children.

Thomas Forbes, born January 15, 1816, in Huntly, Scotland; held office of priest; member of the branch.

Thomas McDonald, born November 22, 1828, in Nairn, Nairn County, Scotland; baptized November 19, 1853, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

John McLean, born in March 1827 in Chroagan, Argyll County, Scotland; baptized January 6, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; held office of elder; member of the branch.

Peter Hay, born August 28, 1827, in Edinburgh, Midlothian County, Scotland; baptized February 2, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

Beach; member of the branch.

Smith; member of the branch.

Smith; member of the branch.

Margeson [or something similar; name is difficult to read]; member of the branch.

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89. Stevenson, *Diary*, table after the March 29, 1854, entry.

Thomas Jack, born July 29, 1821, in Airdrie, Lanarkshire County, Scotland; baptized March 16, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; held office of teacher; member of the branch.

Joseph Miller, born July 24, 1838, in Armagh, county Armagh, Ireland; baptized March 16, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

John Brown, born in Banbridge, county Down, Ireland; baptized March 28, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

John Miller, born in February 1840 in Armagh, county Armagh, Ireland; baptized May 14, 1854; member of the branch.

James Marsial Miller, born in 1844 in Armagh, county Armagh, Ireland; baptized May 14, 1854; member of the branch.

Sharlotte Brown; blessed.

Findley Jack, born July 30, 1853, in Gibraltar; blessed June 3, 1854, by Edward Stevenson.

Louis Bent, born October 9, 1836, in Desford, Leicestershire County, England; baptized October 28, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

Sarah Biddle, born September 5, 1846, in Leicester, Leicestershire, England; baptized October 28, 1854, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

Henery Brooker, born January 18, 1828, in Brighton, Sussex County, England; baptized January 28, 1855, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

Ann Brooker, born March 23, 1825, in Brighton, Sussex County, England; baptized March 29, 1855, by Edward Stevenson; member of the branch.

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The author is grateful for the editorial and research assistance of R. Mark Melville, Kelley Konzack, Jo Lyn Curtis, and Sister Julie Cropper in the preparation of this essay.

Reid L. Neilson received a bachelor's (international relations) and two master's degrees (business management and American history) from Brigham Young University and a PhD in Religious Studies (American religions) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2006, he became Assistant Professor of Church History and Doctrine in Religious Education at BYU, where he received the University Young Scholar Award.

Neilson is the author and editor of over two dozen books, including *Exhibiting Mormonism: The Latter-day Saints and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair*, published by Oxford University Press; *Early Mormon Missionary Activities in Japan, 1901–1924*, published by University of Utah Press and reviewed in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3; and *Taking the Gospel to the Japanese, 1901–2001*, published by BYU Press.

He introduced Alma Taylor's 1901 correspondence with one of the first Buddhist missionaries in America in "A Mormon and a Buddhist Debate Plural Marriage: The Letters of Elder Alma O. Taylor and the Reverend Nishijima Kakuryo, 1901," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2014): 94–120; and presented Alma Taylor's 1910 report to the First Presidency in "Alma Taylor's Fact-Finding Mission to China," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 176–203.

Neilson was named the managing director of the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2010, and Assistant Church Historian and Recorder in 2015. He oversees all department operations, including the Church History Library, the Church History Museum, and the Granite Mountain Records Vault. He serves on the editorial boards of the Joseph Smith Papers Project and Deseret Book Company.

He is preparing a book-length documentary history on the over one hundred men, including Edward Stevenson, whom the First Presidency called to serve missions in 1852, titled *The Fate of the Elders: What Became of the Mormon Missionaries Called around the World in 1852*. With the help of the Church History Department Biographical Register Team led by Sister Patricia L. Spilsbury, he has prepared short histories of all of these elders and their missionary labors.

# Motives and the Path to Perfection

*Lindon J. Robison and David R. Just*

## Motives and the Desires of Our Hearts

The scriptures teach that motives, the desires of our hearts, matter to the Lord. Joseph Smith was instructed that his only motive for obtaining the plates must be to glorify God and to build up his kingdom (JS–H 1:46). The selection of David to be the king of Israel was based on his motives, the desires of his heart, which only God could discern (1 Sam. 16:7). Faith begins with the desire to believe (Alma 32:27). Indeed, we will all be judged at some point by our motives. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, “For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:9).

The Lord cares not only about our motives but also their consistency with our works. He condemned the wicked leaders of his day because with their outward behavior they pretended to be pious, but their motives were selfish. Their hypocrisy led the Savior to compare them to sepulchers, white on the outside and inside full of dead men’s bones (Matt. 23:27). The need for consistency between our motives and works is also reflected in scriptural guidelines for gift giving. For example, if someone gives a gift grudgingly, “it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God” (Moro. 7:8); and, if someone would give a gift but is unable to do so, it is the same as if he had made the offering (Mosiah 4:24, 25).

The Lord makes clear that we can choose (or bridle) our motives and the behavior that these produce (Alma 38:12). Some behavioral scientists disagree, claiming that our behavior is based on habit and reflex.

## Lindon J. Robison and David R. Just

This article resulted from a chance encounter between Lindon and John W. Welch at a Christmas program that included two of their grandchildren. Professor Welch described BYU Studies' interest in articles that have appeared in professional journals but that also have a gospel application. A paper on motives, which Lindon had coauthored, seemed to fit this description. So Lindon approached David Just and asked if he would be interested in cooperating in an effort to describe the relative importance of motives. David's interest in motives had been heightened by a lecture on selfish preferences and rationality in an undergraduate economics class by his favorite professor. After the lecture, he had confessed to his professor that he had a hard time reconciling his own behavior with purely rational and selfish motives. His professor instructed him to repent.



Lindon J. Robison



David R. Just

The exchange between David and his professor illustrates much of the ambivalence we maintain about motives. On the one hand, economics emphasizes that much of behavior can be described by selfish preferences as often expressed in the familiar Adam Smith quote: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."

However, the gospel teaches a much wider range of motives that we explore in this article, such as characterized by the lyrics of a favorite hymn: "I cannot see another's lack and I not share." In the hopes that by understanding our motives, which matter a great deal to the Lord, we wrote this article so that we can better walk the road to perfection.

A dual-decision model rationalizes the conflict by describing two separate decision processes.<sup>1</sup> One decision process is based on habit and reflex, making quick decisions based on immediate circumstances. These decisions are made on autopilot, so to speak. The other decision process for choosing our motives and the behavior that these produce is slow and deliberative, a manual process that considers long-term consequences and a wider variety of trade-offs. Choosing our motives and resulting behavior cannot always happen on autopilot. Rather, deliberately determining our motives requires effort and a long-term struggle. This may be part of what Jacob speaks of when he encourages the Nephites to choose a path such that they can “act for themselves and not . . . be acted upon” (2 Ne. 2:26).

So where do our motives come from? Some economists claim that we are motivated mostly by our own (selfish) need for physical goods and services. As institutional and behavioral economists, we have spent much of our careers exploring other motives derived from other needs. In this essay, we report on a model that considers the need for physical goods and services, the need for validation, the need for belonging, and the need for knowing; these four needs together produce five distinct motives. Then we report on empirical tests designed to measure the relative importance of the five motives and reject the hypothesis that people are mostly motivated by selfish needs for physical goods and services. The model we describe has been useful for us as a way to reconcile our observation that many people appear motivated to meaningful and sincere service and consider the well-being of others in their choices. Finally, we provide scriptural and modern examples of the five motives and discuss how properly bridled motives can lead to more Christlike behavior, but when unbridled can lead to destructive behaviors.

### **The Needs That Shape Our Motives**

Social scientists generally agree that we are motivated by our needs. This section describes needs that we are motivated to satisfy. We find these needs identified in the scriptures and by modern prophets.

While there is no universally accepted list of needs, four are generally accepted: physical needs and the socioemotional needs for belonging, validation, and knowing.<sup>2</sup> Our physical needs are satisfied by

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1. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 20–21.

2. Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962).



physical goods and services that protect and sustain life.<sup>3</sup> These physical needs are sometimes referred to in the scriptures as our need for bread (Moses 4:25). Examples of physical goods include food, clothing, shelter, and safety.

Our socioemotional need for belonging is satisfied by joining, learning about, and adopting the values of the units to which we desire to belong. The need for belonging is also satisfied by caring for those whose well-being we have internalized—especially family and those with whom we have made covenants and contracts. The need for internal validation (self-respect) is satisfied by acting in ways that are consistent with our conscience, sometimes referred to as our ideal self. The need for external validation (the respect of others) is satisfied by acting in ways consistent with the values and norms of others. And the need for knowing is satisfied by, among other things, discovering how our efforts affect our belonging and validation status as perceived by others.

Our socioemotional needs were described by President Gordon B. Hinckley when he taught, “Every [new member] needs three things: a friend [the need for belonging], a responsibility [the need for validation], and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ [the need to know].”<sup>4</sup> Among the things we want to know is that God cares for us and finds our efforts to serve him pleasing (JS–H 1:29; Enos 1:4; 1 Ne. 11:17).

### Five Motives

In this section, we identify five distinct motives derived from the needs described in the previous section. Details of the model from which the five motives were derived are described elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> After describing the five motives, this section describes a progression of our motives from a focus on self to a focus on others that may represent locations along the path to perfection.

**Own Consumption.** Our need for bread motivates us to find ways to increase our own consumption of physical goods and services now and in the future. We call this motive the own consumption motive,

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3. Abraham H. Maslow, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–96.

4. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign* 27 (May 1997): 47.

5. Lindon J. Robison, Robert S. Shupp, Songqing Jin, Marcelo E. Siles, and Tawni H. Ferrarini, “The Relative Importance of Selfishness and Social Capital Motives,” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 41, no. 1 (2012): 118–27.

which corresponds to the selfishness of preference motive that underlies much of neoclassical economic theory. This motive may explain why we sometimes sell our blood as opposed to donating it, shop for bargains, get upset at the slow driver in front of us, and hurry to get in line ahead of others.

**Goodwill.** The need for external validation motivates us to act in ways that win the goodwill and the regard of important others. We call this motive the goodwill motive. This motive may explain why we sometimes compliment the efforts of others, perform visible service, “dress for success,” and give gifts.

**Promise Keeper.** The need for internal validation motivates us to act in harmony with our ideal self, our conscience, or what Robert H. Frank calls our moral emotions.<sup>6</sup> We call this the promise keeper motive. This motive may explain why we return lost wallets, don’t take advantage of others even when we have opportunities to do so, make anonymous contributions, and keep the rules and our promises even when they can’t be enforced.

**Belonging.** The need to belong motivates us to change our feelings of connectedness toward others and organizations, especially when we lack the ability or resources to change the feelings and attitudes others have toward us. We call this motive the belonging motive. This motive may explain why we join clubs, volunteer, wear school colors at home games, or contribute to public radio.

**Sharing.** When filled with empathy, what Adam Smith called sympathy, we internalize the well-being of others. And having done so, we are motivated to act in ways that bless their lives. Smith wrote, “How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.”<sup>7</sup> One way we bless those who are the objects of our empathy is by sharing with them our resources. Therefore, we call this motive the sharing motive. The sharing motive may explain why some soldiers risk their lives to rescue their comrades and why

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6. Robert H. Frank, “The Status of Moral Emotions in Consequentialist Moral Reasoning,” in *Moral Markets: The Critical Role of Values in the Economy*, ed. Paul J. Zak (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 42–59.

7. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. MacFie (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982), 9; also available at <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smMS.html>.

others donate blood, raise children, volunteer at relief centers, and make donations to charities. The sharing motive may also explain why we stop at traffic accidents and offer help. It is the subject of Sunday sermons that encourage us to respond to “the better angels of our nature.”<sup>8</sup>

**Classification of Our Motives.** Our current locations on the path to perfection may be marked by the spiritual maturity of our motives. The beginning motive on the path to perfection is the own consumption motive with its focus on self. Close to the own consumption motive on the path to perfection is the goodwill motive that recognizes we need others to satisfy our need for external validation.

Further along the path is the promise keeper motive. This motive, like the goodwill motive, recognizes the importance of others in meeting our needs, only in this case the validating relationship is with our ideal selves. This motive is further along the path than the own consumption motive because it can sometimes prevent us from acting selfishly when the choice is between increasing our own consumption and being validated by our ideal selves. Etzioni described such a conflict between own consumption and promise keeper motives as a conflict between pleasure and moral commitments. Such a conflict may exist when we must choose between going to a movie and visiting a sick uncle in the hospital.<sup>9</sup>

Continuing along the path toward perfection is the belonging motive. This motive recognizes that we can sometimes increase our sense of belonging by increasing our empathy for others. Moral injunctions consistent with this motive include: “love your enemies,” “do a good turn daily,” and “ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.”

Finally, the motive located farthest along the path to perfection is the sharing motive. This motive arises out of our empathy and leads us to share and serve. This empathetic connection to others creates a sense of belonging, what the scriptures refer to as a state of being one (D&C 38:27).

The strength of the sharing motive depends on the depth and breadth of our empathy for others. The breadth of our empathy is measured by the distance between ourselves and those whose well-being we are able

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8. Abraham Lincoln, “First Inaugural Address, Monday, March 4, 1861,” [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/lincoln1.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln1.asp).

9. Amitai Etzioni, *The Moral Dimension: Toward a New Economics* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 255.

to internalize. Enos demonstrated his increasing breadth of empathy, which began with a focus on self and matured to a concern first for his brethren, the Nephites, and later for his enemies, the Lamanites (Enos 1). The Nephites, in the years after the visit of Christ, demonstrated travel in reverse along the motives path, which began with a focus on others and ended with a focus on self (4 Ne. 1:15–40).

### **The Relative Importance of Motives**

This section summarizes empirical efforts to measure the relative importance of the five motives already identified. Some economists have claimed that people are 95 percent selfish.<sup>10</sup> However, this and similar claims for the dominance of the selfish motive need to be empirically tested. The empirical results that we report in this section lead us to reject the claim that we are mostly motivated by the selfish desire to consume physical goods and services.

To answer the question “How selfish are we?” one of the authors and his colleagues conducted hypothetical surveys and experiments with dollar outcomes. The surveys and experiments were designed to measure the relative importance of the five motives, which was inferred from answers to the surveys and dollar allocations in experiments.<sup>11</sup> In one hypothetical survey, subjects were asked to imagine themselves as prisoners of war who received candy bars without the knowledge of the other prisoners. Then they were asked how they would distribute them. They could consume them (own consumption), use them to keep a promise with another prisoner (promise keeper), share them with a friend (sharing), use them to obtain the goodwill of a guard (goodwill), or contribute to a camp escape effort (belonging). Versions of this study were conducted among domestic and foreign subjects using different hypothetical scenarios. Typical of the results from these studies are those reported below where statistically estimated regression coefficients (which sum to 100 percent) indicate the relative importance of each motive.

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10. Gordon Tullock, quoted by Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 335.

11. Robison and others, “The Relative Importance of Selfishness,” 121.

**Table 1: Surveys Results Designed to Measure the Relative Importance of Motives**

|                | Own Con-<br>sumption<br>$\alpha_1$ | Promise<br>Keepers<br>$\alpha_2$ | Sharing<br>$\alpha_3$ | Goodwill<br>$\alpha_4$ | Belonging<br>$\alpha_5$ |
|----------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Coef. Est.     | 0.33*                              | 0.19*                            | 0.25*                 | 0.09*                  | 0.14*                   |
| T statistic    | (13.67)                            | (10.97)                          | (18.61)               | (5.79)                 | (11.02)                 |
| DW             | .92                                | 1.45                             | 1.08                  | 1.43                   | 1.71                    |
| R <sup>2</sup> | 0.57                               | 0.49                             | 0.69                  | 0.11                   | 0.56                    |

\*Significant at 1%

In survey results reported in table 1, the own consumption (selfishness) motive accounted for 33 percent of candy bar allocations but left 67 percent of the allocations unexplained. Next in significance was the sharing motive, with a coefficient equal to 76 percent of the own consumption motive and 25 percent of the total candy bar allocations. The survey results are not quite up to the standard to “love your neighbor as yourself;” but they are much closer to that standard than the purely selfish motives generally assumed in economic modeling. Next in significance was the promise keeper motive, with a coefficient accounting for 19 percent of total candy bar allocations; the belonging motive allocations, accounting for 13.8 percent; and last, the goodwill motive allocations, accounting for 9 percent of the candy bars.

Despite evidence that reliable results can be obtained by asking hypothetical questions, we asked if, when faced with actual dollar outcomes, experimental subjects would demonstrate the importance of other motives besides selfishness. To measure the relative importance of the belonging motive, experiments were conducted with a variety of participants, all of whom were members of some organization. These organizations included a Rotary Club, an economic club, a foreign student organization at Michigan State University, students from Northern Michigan University (NMU), and the dairy science club at Michigan State University.

The experimental results with actual dollars were consistent with the hypothetical surveys. Participants were asked to allocate money however they liked among options that embodied each of the motives. With respect to the own consumption motive, Rotary Club members kept 9 percent of the money for themselves, dairy club members kept 33 percent, international students kept 24 percent, members of the economic

club kept 16 percent, and NMU students kept 55 percent. In addition, the study tested the null hypothesis that the coefficient of selfishness was equal in importance to the sum of the other motives (a sort of imperfect operationalization of the second great commandment). That hypothesis was rejected again at the 1 percent level for four of the five groups and at 5 percent for the students from NMU.

The experiments found considerable variation in the strength of motives across different groups. Allocation decisions for Rotary Club members are dominated by the promise keeper motive (45 percent) and the goodwill motive (42 percent). Economic club members behaved similarly to those in the Rotary Club. For NMU students, their own consumption motive dominated. In all cases, our study led us to reject the hypothesis that we are 95 percent selfish.

### **Relationships between Motives**

We recognize, and the survey and experimental results reported above confirm, that behind our choices may be multiple motives, and the relative importance of these vary among groups and individuals. We already reported how motives varied between groups of persons. However, other studies conducted by one of the authors and his colleagues suggest that changes in our opportunities to exchange alter the relative importance of motives. To illustrate, when buying gasoline, the own consumption motive appears to dominate. Meanwhile, when voting or donating blood, the sharing or promise keeper motives appear to dominate.

One important pattern evident in our survey results was that the own consumption motive and the promise keeper motive were strongly and negatively correlated. Persons with strong own consumption motives tended to have lower promise keeper motives.

More generally, as the relative importance of any one motive increased, the relative importance of some other motive(s) decreased. This constraint created important connections between motives. For example, consider the goodwill motive. One selfish use of our goodwill is to increase our income by selling products like life insurance, cutlery, candles, and plastic containers, which can then be used to purchase personal consumption items. However, when bridled by a strong sharing motive, we may use our goodwill to increase our income, which we then use to support a local charity.

An example of the connection between the own consumption motive and the sharing motive may be inferred from the scriptures. When filled with love that accompanies a hope in Christ, a necessary condition for

the sharing motive, Jacob taught that we will obtain riches if we seek them, but we will seek them to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, liberate the captive, and in other ways share (Jacob 2:19).

### **Scriptural and Modern Examples of the Five Motives**

This section identifies scriptural and modern examples of behavior consistent with the five motives already described. These examples provide directions for choosing motives consistent with Christlike behavior. The lessons learned from these examples encourage us to adopt the sharing motive to bridle the behavior produced by the other four motives.

**Scriptural and Modern Examples of the Own Consumption Motive.** Without the moderating influence of the sharing motive, the desire to increase our consumption drives selfish behavior. This motive has been associated with much of the evil and ills of the world. Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, “In one degree or another we all struggle with selfishness. Since it is so common, why worry about selfishness anyway? Because selfishness is really self-destruction in slow motion. No wonder the Prophet Joseph Smith urged, ‘Let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated.’ Hence annihilation—not moderation—is the destination!”<sup>12</sup> Making the connection between sin and selfishness, Elder Maxwell also wrote, “By focusing on himself, a selfish person finds it easier to bear false witness, to steal, and covet, since nothing should be denied him.”<sup>13</sup>

Regarding the consequences of selfishness described in sacred script, Elder William R. Bradford wrote, “It was Cain’s selfishness that caused him to bind himself up to Satan and, to get gain, murder his brother Abel. Selfishness debased the children of Israel as they drank and played and corrupted themselves around the idol of the golden calf. And only selfishness could have induced Judas to betray the holy, selfless Lord.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet man has need of bread and, like Adam and Eve, must spend a considerable amount of energy “tilling the ground” to provide for himself and his family. What makes these efforts acceptable to the Lord is the mitigating influence of the sharing motive that arises out of our empathy.

The Lord revealed to John and Peter Whitmer: “For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto

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12. Neal A. Maxwell, “‘Repent of [Our] Selfishness’ (D&C 56:8),” *Ensign* 29 (May 1999): 23.

13. Maxwell, “‘Repent of [Our] Selfishness,’” 23.

14. William R. Bradford, “Selfishness vs. Selflessness,” *Ensign* 13 (April 1983): 49–51.

you [the own consumption motive]. Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given you according to my commandments” (D&C 15:4, 5; 16:4, 5).

John and Peter Whitmer’s appeal to the Lord for guidance was initially motivated by their selfishness (what is of most worth for me). What they learned was that they could not improve their own well-being without serving others, which included sharing the gospel (D&C 15:6; 16:6).

Internalizing the well-being of others mellows selfishness into self-interest—so that when we act, we do so in ways that promote the interests of others as well as our own. As the Lord revealed to the Whitmers, improving our own well-being may be a noble goal if in the process others are elevated and made better as well.

Joseph Smith once taught that the principle of self-aggrandizement is a correct principle “and may be indulged [in] upon only one rule or plan—and that is to elevate, benefit and bless others first. If you will elevate others, the very work itself will exalt you. Upon no other plan can a man justly and permanently aggrandize himself.”<sup>15</sup> The Savior summarized the same principle: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25).

**Scriptural and Modern Examples of the Goodwill Motive.** Without the moderating influence of the sharing motive, the goodwill motive is selfish and manipulative. For example, the religious leaders of Christ’s day sought to earn the external validation of the people. Then when their command over the people’s goodwill was threatened by the Savior, they acted selfishly and sought to destroy him, inciting the people to demand the Savior’s crucifixion.

A version of the goodwill motive may explain why some people serve in the Church. Elder Dallin H. Oaks wrote, “Some may serve for hope of earthly reward. Such a man or woman might serve in Church positions or in private acts of mercy in an effort to achieve prominence or cultivate contacts that would increase income or aid in acquiring wealth. Others might serve in order to obtain worldly honors, prominence, or power.”<sup>16</sup> Of these selfish persons, Nephi wrote that they serve to “get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Ne. 26:29).

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15. Quoted in Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, comps., *They Knew the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974), 61.

16. Dallin H. Oaks, “Why Do We Serve?” *Ensign* 14 (November 1984): 13.



On the other hand, some may seek the goodwill of others to do good when their desires are mellowed by love. Such was the case of Ammon, one of King Mosiah's sons. During his missionary sojourn with the Lamanites, he was assigned to tend King Lamoni's flocks. While he was engaged in this effort, robbers scattered the sheep he and Lamoni's other servants were tending. Apparently, losing the king's sheep was a capital offense, and Lamoni's servants were afraid of the consequences. Ammon saw the situation as an opportunity to impress his companions with the power he had received from the Lord and to gain their goodwill, which he could use to lead them to Christ. The Book of Mormon records, "Now they [Lamoni's servants] wept because of the fear of being slain. Now when Ammon saw this his heart was swollen within him with joy; for, said he, I will show forth my power unto these my fellow-servants, or the power which is in me, in restoring these flocks unto the king, that I may win the hearts of these my fellow-servants, that I may lead them to believe in my words" (Alma 17:29).

Other scriptural examples consistent with the goodwill motive include Mormon's account of the Nephite effort to convert the Gadian-ton robbers—so they would consider the Nephites as their brothers and sisters and no longer seek to destroy them (3 Ne. 5:4), and Jacob, who was motivated by the desire to earn Esau's goodwill when, after many years of separation, he sent him gifts in advance of their meeting (Gen. 32:3–5).

The desire to win the goodwill of others may explain the popularity of self-help classics such as *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. The theme of such books is that the goodwill of others is really an important resource that can be gained by validating others and inviting them to belong.

One historical tragedy was that of Pilate, who seems to have let his desire to earn the goodwill of the Roman emperor and some Jewish leaders exceed his sense of duty to protect the innocent, this duty falling under the promise keeper motive. To promote this selfish end, he allowed an innocent man in whom he found no fault to be crucified.

The Savior counseled against giving alms to gain what we have called the goodwill of others for selfish purposes: "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matt. 6:2).

It may be that the goodwill motive led Joseph Smith to lend Martin Harris the 116 pages despite being counseled against such action by the Lord (D&C 3:12–15). Afterwards, he was steadfast in resisting the

goodwill motive when it came to matters of the Lord's kingdom, preferring to follow God rather than man.

**Scriptural and Modern Examples of the *Promise Keeper Motive*.** Somewhere deep inside of us lives the need for internal validation from our ideal self, sometimes called our conscience. This motive is characterized by a quotation attributed to Joan of Arc. She declared in the words of a poet, "One life is all we have, and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it's gone. But to surrender what you are, and live without belief, that's more terrible than dying—more terrible than dying young."<sup>17</sup>

President Thomas S. Monson quoted a poem by the famed minister H. E. Fosdick to describe the connection between duty and the promise keeper motive: "Men will work hard for money. They will work harder for [the goodwill of] other men. But men will work hardest of all when they are dedicated to a cause. Until willingness overflows obligation, men fight as conscripts rather than following the flag as patriots. Duty is never worthily performed until it is performed by one who would gladly do more if only he could."<sup>18</sup>

At times other motives may lead us to act out of character with our ideal self—but there is a price to be paid. If our ideal self is a person of integrity, then we keep our promises. Otherwise we suffer the strains of a stressed relationship with our ideal self.

Elder Oaks also identified our sense of duty or loyalty as an important motive for serving. "Those who serve out of a sense of duty or loyalty to various wholesome causes are the good and honorable men and women of the earth."<sup>19</sup>

President George Albert Smith declared, "It is your duty first of all to learn what the Lord wants and then by the power and strength of His holy priesthood to magnify your calling in the presence of your fellows in such a way that the people will be glad to follow you."<sup>20</sup>

President Abraham Lincoln spoke of the importance of being validated by one's ideal self when he wrote: "I desire to so conduct the affairs

17. Maxwell Anderson, *Joan of Lorraine* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1945), act 2, scene 4.

18. Harry Emerson Fosdick, in *Vital Quotations*, comp. Emerson Roy West (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 38.

19. Oaks, "Why Do We Serve?" 14.

20. George Albert Smith, in *One Hundred Twelfth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1942), 14. See also Thomas S. Monson, "The Sacred Call of Service," *Ensign* 35 (May 2005): 54.

of this administration that if, at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me.”<sup>21</sup>

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego may have been motivated by what we call the promise keeper motive. They refused to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s idol even when the consequence of refusing was being cast into the fire. Still, their conscience would not allow them to worship the idol, preferring to be at peace with their ideal selves rather than earn the goodwill of the king (Dan. 3:18).

Karl G. Maeser once described the importance of what we refer to as the promise keeper motive by connecting it to honor. He was asked about the phrase *word of honor*. He responded, “Place me behind prison walls—walls of stone ever so high, ever so thick, reaching ever so far into the ground—there is a possibility that in some way or another I may be able to escape, but stand me on that floor and draw a chalk line around me and have me give my word of honor never to cross it. Can I get out of that circle? No, never! I’d die first!”<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, the virtue of the promise keeper motive may also be turned to vice unless mellowed by the sharing motive. For example, consider the story of the Savior’s parable of the prodigal son and his brother. The prodigal son’s brother believes he has done his duty and earned the goodwill of his father. So he is taken aback by his father’s joy at his prodigal brother’s return. He complains to his father, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment” (Luke 15:29). The father then chides his dutiful son for his lack of joy over his brother’s return while affirming his goodwill towards him. A lack of empathy and love prevented the brother from sharing in his father’s joy.

**Scriptural and Modern Examples of the Belonging Motive.** Being isolated is often connected with unhappy words like “lone and dreary.” Jacob described his people as “being a lonesome and a solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem” (Jacob 7:26).

There are two ways we can change our connections to others and increase our sense of belonging. The first one is to increase the sympathy others have toward us. This effort may be described as a component of the goodwill motive, which we have already described. The second way we can change a relationship is to change the way we feel about others,

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21. Bob Blaisdell, ed., *Abraham Lincoln’s Wit and Wisdom* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2013), 117.

22. Alma P. Burton, *Karl G. Maeser: Mormon Educator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1953), 71.

what we sometimes refer to as a change of heart. Regarding the need to change our caring for others, Moroni encouraged his people to “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ” (Moro. 7:48). One of our hymns has us praying, “Lord, give me the will to mend; O Lord, change me from foe to friend.”<sup>23</sup> Another hymn also describes the importance and the need to change our feelings toward Jesus Christ:

More holiness give me,  
 More strivings within,  
 More patience in suff'ring,  
 More sorrow for sin,  
 More faith in my Savior,  
 More sense of his care,  
 More joy in his service,  
 More purpose in prayer.

More gratitude give me,  
 More trust in the Lord,  
 More pride in his glory,  
 More hope in his Word,  
 More tears for his sorrows,  
 More pain at his grief,  
 More meekness in trial,  
 More praise for relief.<sup>24</sup>

As G. K. Chesterton said, if we can be interested in others, even if they are not interested in us, we will find ourselves “under a freer sky, [and] in a street full of splendid strangers.”<sup>25</sup> Ruth expressed her motivation to belong when responding to her mother-in-law’s encouragement to make her own separate life: “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). And when Nephi gained a promise from Zoram to join Lehi and his people, the covenant was that he would change his allegiance and commitment—he would belong to this new family. And if one more example were needed, it would be the Anti-Nephi-Lehies,

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23. Lorin F. Wheelwright, “O Love That Glorifies the Son,” in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 295.

24. Philip Paul Bliss, “More Holiness Give Me,” in *Hymns*, no. 131.

25. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane, 1908), 35.

who changed their feelings for the Nephites, after their conversion, from antipathy to sympathy (Alma 23:18).

However, the need to belong can also lead those most lonely to join with destructive groups. Giddianhi, the leader of the band of robbers, displayed how the belonging motive can be perverted when he attempted to entice Lachoneus to join his nefarious band: “Yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us” (3 Ne. 3:7). Clearly part of the motive for joining this murderous band was to belong to a group and obtain the external validation that one naturally craves.

**Scriptural and Modern Examples of the Sharing Motive.** When we internalize the well-being of others, their successes and good fortunes as well as their deprivations become our own. We are motivated by their needs, which may include the need for bread, validation, belonging, and knowing. This dimension of the sharing motive is captured by the words of a hymn: “I cannot see another’s lack and I not share.”<sup>26</sup>

Lehi’s description of the reasons why he taught his children the teachings of Christ would fit under what we call the sharing motive; Lehi desired that his family know the things of God. “And I have none other object save it be the everlasting welfare of your souls” (2 Ne. 2:30).

What we call the sharing motive may have been a part of what motivated George Washington, about whom it has been written, “In all history few men who possessed unassailable power have used that power so gently and self-effacingly for what their best instincts told them was the welfare of their neighbors and all mankind.”<sup>27</sup>

Alma provides a wonderful description of being motivated by what is referred to here as the sharing motive and the own consumption needs of his people. After Korihor accused him of acting selfishly, Alma responded, “Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people. . . . And now, if we do not receive anything for our labors in the church, what doth it profit us to labor in the church save it were to declare the truth, that we may have rejoicings in the joy of our brethren?” (Alma 30:32, 34).

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26. Grace Noll Crowell, “Because I Have Been Given Much,” *Hymns*, no. 219.

27. James Thomas Flexner, *Washington: The Indispensable Man* (New York: New American Library, 1984), xvi.

Sharing, the most Christlike of motives and furthest along the path to perfection, is often challenged by our selfishness. Such was Joseph Smith's test. Moroni warned Joseph about seeking the plates for selfish reasons. He told Joseph that "Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them" (JS-H 1:46).

On the surface, it seems that such a noble motive as sharing is unassailable. Nonetheless, if the sharing motive leads us to care about uplifting one person to the detriment of others, it may also be seen as a vice. For example, the book of 1 Samuel tells in great detail how the prophet Eli's sons not only did not believe in the God of Israel, but openly made a mock of God's commandments. Despite Eli acknowledging their faults, he would not remove them from their office in the priesthood. The Lord did not just punish Eli's sons (killing them both in one day), but Eli as well, removing all of his house from their positions in the priesthood (1 Sam. 2).

As Enos illustrates, the righteousness of the sharing motive depends on the radius of our caring—from family and friends, whom even the Gentiles love, to those not like us—and when fully developed the radius of caring includes even our enemies. And only when we have reached that radius of caring can we become truly Christlike.

### **Summary: Our Motives and the Path to Perfection**

Elder Maxwell taught the importance of educating our desires: "Fortunately for us, our loving Lord will work with us, 'even if [we] can [do] no more than desire to believe,' providing we will 'let this desire work in [us]' (Alma 32:27)."<sup>28</sup> President Joseph F. Smith taught, "The education then of our desires is one of far-reaching importance to our happiness in life."<sup>29</sup> Elder Maxwell connected desires and works by referring to President Brigham Young, who taught, "Holy desires produce corresponding outward works."<sup>30</sup> Therefore, concluded Elder Maxwell, "Only

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28. Neal A. Maxwell, "According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts," *Ensign* 26 (November 1996): 22.

29. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 297.

30. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 6:170 (January 17, 1858).

by educating and training our desires can they become our allies instead of our enemies!”<sup>31</sup>

Christ prescribed the path we should follow when he commanded us to first love God and second our neighbor. When we are filled with love, our sharing motive is strengthened and bridles the own consumption, goodwill, promise keeper, and belonging motives. Only then are we led to do noble deeds.

The path to perfection requires that we develop right motives. This will be a lengthy and difficult process. Joseph Smith taught that “the nearer man approaches perfection, the more conspicuous are his views, & the greater his enjoyments, until he has overcome the evils of this life and lost every desire of sin; and like the ancients, arrives to that point of faith that he is wrapped in the glory and power of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment.”<sup>32</sup>

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Lindon J. Robison is Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics (AFRE) at Michigan State University. He holds BS, MS, and PhD degrees from Utah State University, University of Illinois, and Texas A&M University, respectively. He was elected a fellow of the Institutional and Behavioral Economics section of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association and recently completed a two-year assignment as the interim chair of AFRE. He has published numerous books and articles, including “Economic Insights from the Book of Mormon” and “No Poor among Them,” both published in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. He described how he became interested in the connection between economics and his faith on the “Mormon Scholars Testify” website.

David R. Just is Professor in the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University. He received his BA in economics from Brigham Young University, and MS and PhD degrees in agricultural and resource economics from the University of California, Berkeley. He currently serves as the director of the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs and the director of graduate studies for the field of applied economics and management. He has published scores of papers in the field of behavioral economics, with much of his research focusing on the effects of choice restriction on behavior.

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31. Maxwell, “According to the Desire of [Our] Hearts,” 22.

32. Joseph Smith, “To the Elders of the Church in Kirtland, to Their Brethren Abroad,” *Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (February 1834): 135.

# The Mormon Missionary

## Who Is That Knocking at My Door?

*Robert L. Lively Jr.*

*Robert L. Lively Jr. is dean emeritus at the University of Maine at Farmington and holds a master's degree from Yale University Divinity School and a doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Oxford. The following are excerpts from his 2015 book *The Mormon Missionary: Who Is That Knocking at My Door?*, conceived after inviting missionaries to visit his religion classes and realizing that a non-Mormon had never written a book that tells the story of LDS missionaries. His research for this book involved over 275 interviews with past, present, and future missionaries, including individuals who served in every decade since the 1930s, in the United States and forty-seven countries around the world. Church officials were very supportive of his project. He was able to interview Church officials in Salt Lake City, including President Gordon B. Hinckley, as well as mission presidents, stake presidents, and local congregational leaders. He also had the rare opportunity of visiting Missionary Training Centers in Utah and England, where he conducted interviews with missionaries in training and with MTC presidents and their staff.*

### **PROLOGUE**

#### **Missionaries in the Religion Classroom**

My students were not pleased when I suggested we invite Mormon missionaries to speak to our religion class at the University of Maine at Farmington, a public liberal arts college of 2,000 students located in west-central Maine. This surprised me, because they generally enjoyed visits from representatives of faiths we were studying—from Adventists to Zen Buddhists—but for some reason they balked at the idea of Mormon missionaries.



Most in the class of thirty acknowledged that people had knocked on their door, wanting to talk about religion (although they frequently confused Mormons with Jehovah's Witnesses), but few had invited them in. They found them a mild irritant. One student said he didn't like people trying to force their religion down his throat; an older woman admitted she had chased them off her porch "a time or two"; while a third said she went into the basement and did her laundry when she saw two well-dressed young men coming down the road.

The students chuckled; but then some became self-reflective. One student said she always turned them away but felt bad doing so because they seemed so nice, while an older student admitted their appearance made him realize he wasn't as patient as he thought he was, for he would close the door before they could finish saying hello. "So," said a young man sitting in the front row and wearing a Boston Red Sox baseball cap, "if we don't invite them into our homes, why should we invite them into our classroom? Do we *have* to invite them?"

Exercising my professorial prerogative, I said, "Yes!"

I extended an invitation to two young women and two young men who were serving their missions in our area, which is a rural region characterized by small towns, pristine lakes, and forests of pine, birch, and maple. I asked them to say something about themselves, to talk about the history and beliefs of their church, and to describe what it is like to be a missionary.

The presentation was followed by animated discussion. Students were respectful, but direct. Their interest had become obvious. Evangelical Protestants questioned the need for a new prophet and a new scripture, saying Jesus and the Bible are all that are needed for salvation. Many students questioned why they needed to live such austere lives, and they wondered how missionaries dealt with rejection and with people being rude to them. The missionaries, as they are taught, didn't argue; they merely shared their beliefs and experiences.

My students continued the conversation during the next class period, speaking more bluntly without the missionaries present. Evangelicals felt Latter-day Saints should not be considered Christians, in spite of the fact that "Jesus Christ" appears in the name. The term "cult" was used more than once. Those with an academic interest in religion found the idea of progressive revelation, which suggests that the potential exists for new prophets and new scriptures, to be an interesting concept. They just weren't sure Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon had a part in the process.

But it was the missionaries' rigorous and disciplined lifestyle that intrigued students the most, and while many said they neither would,

nor could, do what Mormon missionaries do, they did appreciate what the Latter-day Saint Church and the missionaries gained from it: the Church gained converts and a more committed membership, and missionaries came away with a stronger faith and with knowledge and skills that would serve them for a lifetime.

At the end of the class period, when I asked if I should invite Mormon missionaries back in subsequent semesters, students responded with an enthusiastic, “Yes!”

## CHAPTER 6

### FIND

#### “Without Purse or Scrip”

One of the most unique interviews for this study was with a missionary who served in New England in the late 1940s. He must have been one of the last in this country to travel “without purse or scrip”: the practice of proselytizing with little money, food, or clothes in hand, depending on the goodwill of people to house and feed the missionary. It is an approach to missions that missionaries from many different faiths have practiced over the centuries, including Latter-day Saint missionaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The practice is inconceivable among Mormon missionaries today, and it was a special set of circumstances that led the interviewee to engage in it in eastern Massachusetts and in the Connecticut River Valley in the late 1940s.

Latter-day Saint missionaries weren’t having much success in the larger cities in New England following WWII, because Yankee Calvinists had been replaced by Irish, Polish, and Italian immigrants, most of whom were devoutly Roman Catholic. They had been told by their priests not to talk with representatives of other faiths, because it was said to be harmful to their spiritual well-being. The interviewee said that when they knocked on the door and the person realized they weren’t from the local parish, older women would appear frightened, while the men (as he recalled in one instance) would tell them they had ten seconds to get off of the porch, or they would be thrown off.

The mission president, realizing they weren’t going to get anywhere in the cities and that the shrinking Yankee population was still out in the countryside, decided missionaries should concentrate on small towns instead of big cities. He sent them out two-by-two with the barest of necessities—a change of underwear and some literature—and that was about it.

The mission president referred to it as “country work.” As soon as the snow melted, missionaries gave up the place where they stayed

in the winter, and they started walking. The interviewee stressed that they walked (they didn't have bicycles), and he did it for thirteen of his twenty-four-month mission. They slept outside maybe five times during the entire time. Every other night they found people to take them in, or they were in jail. They didn't have to twist arms; all they had to do was tell people their situation and they experienced considerable hospitability.

They walked from one town to another, and they corresponded through the mail every week with the mission president. They told him what town they expected to be in the next week, and he would forward their mail from home to them, care of general delivery at the post office in the next small town, a distance of perhaps twenty to thirty miles.

It was an experience "that separated the men from the boys," he said, and while some elders broke down during the process, very few went home early. Most who engaged in the practice were WWII veterans who had seen worse (which may help account for the fact that the mission president allowed it). The interviewee wasn't a veteran, but a nineteen-year-old from California who found it to be a scary experience; but he finally took to it, because it was a challenge to do something that was really "flaky," and he was just enough of a kid that the idea of doing something unconventional like that appealed to him.

"Not my better instincts," he added, "but it had its appeal." In the summer of 1947, he and his companion walked up the Connecticut River on the New Hampshire side, and down the river on the Vermont side, stopping at all the towns along the way. They would go into a town, typically containing a few hundred people, and they lined up a meeting hall to which they invited people that night. It could be a grange hall, or a church if the minister wasn't anti-Mormon, or a school if they found someone on the school board who was friendly. On occasion they were turned away pretty abruptly from all of these possibilities and would have to depend on some friendly soul whose door they knocked on and who had a living room large enough to invite.

Almost without exception (and there were exceptions, to be sure), they succeeded early in finding some kind of meeting hall, and then they would canvas the whole town, knocking on every door, telling people who they were and why they were there, and inviting them to a meeting that evening.

He and his companion played the piano at the meeting, sang, prayed, and gave a sermon. They left behind pamphlets and copies of the Book of Mormon. They asked for fifty-cent donations for the books, which people usually paid.

They were thrown on their own resources and had to improvise in order to find teaching opportunities. He and his companion were in a drugstore in a small town in New Hampshire in July 1947 when they overheard a man from the Rotary Club bemoaning the fact that the guest speaker for the day's meeting was unable to attend at the last minute and that the Rotarians would be expecting a speaker, but that he as the program chairperson didn't have anyone else he could turn to. The interviewee said he noticed on the newsstand a picture of Brigham Young on the cover of a magazine, commemorating the centennial anniversary of the arrival of Young and the Mormon Pioneers to the Great Salt Lake Valley. He walked over to the man, introduced himself and his companion, pointed to the magazine and said, "Would you like to know about this? We will come and talk to you for free."

The man gave them lunch, and they spoke to the Rotarians for around thirty minutes. This opened up speaking opportunities at other Rotary Clubs.

The elders weren't always so well-received. There were nights when they had to sleep in jail. Sheriffs would pick them up under vagrancy laws, which required strangers in town to be able to cover a night's lodging, and, if they couldn't, they were operationally defined as a vagrant and would be locked up for the night. Thus they had to compromise and carry enough money to cover a night's lodging, but they hoped they wouldn't have to use it. In a lot of towns, it was five dollars each for lodging, so that is how much they each carried.

The experience created a special bond between the missionaries involved. They met periodically for local, district-wide, or mission-wide missionary conferences. As he described it: "We, of course, had war stories to tell, which was a great part of the fun, but of course these war stories took on a life of their own, and, like all war stories, they got well-embroidered with each new telling, each trying to top the other."

Their relationship remained strong for many years thereafter, renewed by annual missionary reunions in Salt Lake City.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS**

#### **Americans at the Door, and Speaking the Native's Language**

Some are impressed by the fact that American LDS missionaries meet them in their homes, and they are doubly impressed by the fact that LDS missionaries (of any nationality) speak the language of the country.

An American elder who served in Brazil said they were told it was an honor for Brazilians to have Americans in their home. An American elder who served in an Afrikaans area of South Africa worked with an Afrikaans companion and became proficient with the language, because they agreed to speak Afrikaans all the time. They taught and baptized an Afrikaans mother and daughter, and the interviewee said it was a highlight of his missionary experience. He was able to teach them in their native tongue, and they were thrilled that an American, “with an American twang in Afrikaans,” would teach them and have the respect to learn their language.

An American elder who served in smaller, rural towns in Mexico said he and his companion would tract out the whole town, and in some places people were quite willing to talk with them. They may not have been interested in religion, but they were willing to invite them in and talk with them. In one town they were the first Mormon missionaries to visit there, and they were something of a curiosity. The local Roman Catholic priests viewed them as a tremendous threat, but they got into almost everyone’s home. People were curious and charmed, for here were two young gringo missionaries at their door. People weren’t always sure who the young men were, even when they were told, but they were impressed with these two young, clean-cut men who were speaking pretty good Spanish.

The interviewee surmised the combination of native hospitality for a foreigner, plus a charming foreigner, was the basis for letting them into their homes. A lot of them almost seemed flattered that young foreigners were talking with them; they often got the sense they were flattering the Mexicans by coming into their homes and giving them attention. If the missionaries continued to be charming, knew the language, were comfortable with the customs, and were interested in coming back, sometimes out of that would develop a more serious commitment on the Mexican’s part, and they would want to participate in the discussions.

### **Times and Seasons: The Effects of Historical Events**

Missionaries serving in the latter half of the twentieth century saw the effects of dramatic world events on people’s lives, and they saw how these events affected their success (or lack thereof) at proselytizing.

A sister who served in France in the mid-1960s said the work was pretty slow in Europe at that time. She taught two or three investigators, who were then baptized by elders, in a year’s time. Many people she encountered “had a pretty grim view of life.” They had been through

some very hard times: World War II and the Algerian War, a decolonization war which took place between 1954 and 1962 in which Algeria gained its independence from France. Both wars were quite a part of many people's lives. At many of the doors on which she and her companion knocked people would say that anyone who believes in God is foolish, for He wouldn't allow all of the suffering to go on that they saw in the world. They didn't even want to hear about God.

A woman who lived in Italy as a teenager during World War II, and who lived through American air raids, confronted American missionaries when they appeared at her door in Brazil many years later. She asked how Americans could drop bombs on her head but then want to talk with her about the gospel. She had particular reservations about Joseph Smith, questioning how he could be a modern-day prophet, especially since he was an American. She eventually had a change of heart and joined the Church.

An American elder who served in Germany in the late 1990s said they tracted into a man in his eighties in Schwarzenberg, and they taught him the first discussion. At the end he told the elders he respected them for coming so far from their homes, but there was something they had to understand. First, he said, the country had Hitler, who promised that everything would be better if they followed Nazism—but it wasn't. Then the Communists came and said if they followed communism, life would be good—but it wasn't. Then the Berlin wall came down, and capitalism came in, and everyone promised life would be better—but it wasn't.

"So now," continued the elderly man, "you two young men from America come and tell me that if I join this religion, everything will be better. You will have to forgive me, but I don't believe you."

The elder said it put things into perspective, and he could see the man's point.

### **Who Are the Converts, and Why?**

A General Authority told me that the majority of international converts to the Latter-day Saint Church today are either Roman Catholics or the unchurched. Roman Catholics are coming especially from Latin America, and part of that success may be the Book of Mormon itself, since it claims to be the history of the peoples who inhabited the area, thus giving divine importance to their ancestral heritage.

An American anthropologist colleague encountered Mormon missionaries while working in Peru in the 2000s, and she commented that evangelical movements and Latter-day Saints were making definite

headway in the south-central Peruvian Andes. She observed that the nicest building in the entire town of Andahuaylas was the Mormon church, but what was unusual about it was that, unlike other churches in town, the Mormon church had a large iron fence around the compound, giving the impression that it was completely off limits to nonmembers. (I observed the same thing in Mongolia.) She didn't personally encounter Mormon missionaries in Andahuaylas, but she was told that groups of Latter-day Saints from the United States periodically came to build houses in the Andahuaylas area. People were always amazed at how fast a group of Americans could build a house, as compared to how long it typically took locals to build one.

While she wasn't researching the Latter-day Saint Church in Peru, Peruvians told the anthropologist that the primary reason why people were switching from Catholicism to the Mormon faith was the prohibition on drinking alcohol. The conversion process was typically led by women in an attempt to get their husbands to stop drinking, because heavy consumption of alcohol was strongly associated with domestic violence.

A Venezuelan convert who served his mission in his home country said his mother prayed for help because his father was a heavy drinker; the Latter-day Saint missionaries appeared at their door not long thereafter—the only door in the apartment building they knocked on. The family converted.

A Russian Orthodox priest I spoke to in Petrozavodsk, Russia, while no fan of Western missionaries pouring into his country and luring his flock away, did concede that Latter-day Saints were having some success in helping Russians who had drinking problems.

When I asked a returned missionary and current college professor why the Latter-day Saint Church is so successful in Latin America, he said the Church offers something very different for families: it offers “a real lifestyle change” that is very attractive to people. Spiritual principles are taught, help is available—whether in combating alcoholism or an addiction to tobacco—and practical assistance is offered, whether it is improved health care or building a new home. “These things change lives,” he observed, “and it does something for them spiritually and physically. It makes quite a difference in their lives, they are excited by it, they share that with their friends, and pretty soon their friends want to know about it, and their friends end up joining the Church.”

He went on to say that in Brazil (in contrast to countries like the United States and Western Europe, where the Church has had a presence

since the nineteenth century), the Latter-day Saint Church hasn't been there that long and Brazilians are still meeting Mormon missionaries for the first time. "They have not seen them at the door ten times before," he observed. "I suppose that is part of it, too."

## CHAPTER 10 SISTER MISSIONARIES

There is a story that circulates at the Provo MTC:

Three elders found a magic lamp at the Provo MTC, and when they rubbed it a genie appeared.

"Since there are three of you," said the genie, "I will grant you each one wish."

"I want to perform two hundred baptisms during my mission," said the first elder.

"Consider it done," said the genie.

"I would like to be a mission president some day," said the second elder.

"It will be granted," said the genie.

"I would like to be the *best* missionary in the history of the Church!" exclaimed the third elder.

"It too shall be," said the genie—and the young elder was immediately turned into a sister missionary.

There has been a decided shift in the Latter-day Saint Church over the past three or four decades regarding how Church members perceive young LDS women serving missions. What used to be seen as an unusual activity, or one even worthy of pity, has been replaced by attitudes of acceptance and even of encouragement.

Young Latter-day Saint women aren't expected to serve—that is the responsibility of the young elders—rather, their role in the Church is that of spouse, mother, and homemaker. When a young woman did go on a mission in earlier decades of the twentieth century, some Church members would wonder: "Why is she serving a mission? Can't she find a husband? Is a mission her last resort?"

This questioning has given way in more recent decades to a more positive attitude about sisters serving, which is shaped by forces both within and without the Latter-day Saint Church. Interviewees spoke of watching brothers, relatives, and friends return from their missions and of being struck by what a positive experience it had been for them: they were more mature, had better communication skills, and exhibited a deeper spirituality. The sisters wanted the same for themselves.



Attitudes by and about women were also changing in the wider American society; postponing marriage, personal independence, and considering options outside of marriage and motherhood were accepted and even encouraged.

As a result, many young Latter-day Saint women now actively seek to serve their Church through missions. They want to help spread the Latter-day Saint gospel, and they want to share in the benefits that come from the experience.

Some young sisters report they don't want to marry early—they want to consider other options first, be it further education, employment, or a mission. But with options come choices, and some sisters report that having more choices makes their decision to serve that much more difficult. It comes down to following the counsel of Church leaders, or not.

“Do I date and marry, or do I postpone marriage until *after* my mission?” asked a sister.

Earlier generations of sisters said they didn't have to face this dilemma. Serving a mission “wasn't even on their radar screen,” as one older woman described it. Since it was not expected of them, they didn't even think about it. Many of today's younger sisters *do* think about it, but since they don't have a mandate to serve, since it isn't a clear-cut decision as it is for young men, some sisters decide to serve only at the last minute. And when they do serve, some carry lingering doubts about whether they should have stayed home and married.

### **A Bimodal Distribution?**

One of the more awkward topics that surfaced during research for this book had to do with what a returned sister missionary and current college professor labeled as the perceived “bimodal distribution” of the effectiveness of sisters. Put more bluntly, there is the perception among some that sisters make the best missionaries—and that they also make the worst missionaries; that committed and motivated sisters can do wonders, while sisters who came out for the wrong reasons may not contribute much to the mission. On the one end of the spectrum are the very committed, true believers who are very bright, very smart, and who come into the mission with the attitude, “I'm taking control,” whereas at the other end are those sisters who say, “I am not married, what shall I do? If I go on a mission, maybe I will meet someone.”

A sister who served in Japan in the early 1970s described this bimodal perception. She said sisters were either perceived as an “anchor,” as more

mature, and as contributing to more baptisms, or they were perceived as being emotionally and physically weak and a “bother.”

There were female and male interviewees who said they felt there was some truth to the stereotype, but there were also those, sisters and elders, who said it wasn’t a true representation, that there are effective and not-so-effective elders, just as there are effective and not-so-effective sisters. Some suggested that the sisters’ smaller numbers contributed to the bimodal perception, that since they are fewer in number they are more noticeable. Others said that the sisters’ greater propensity to talk about their feelings and concerns, as compared to the more reticent elders, contributed to the perception that sisters complain more and are less stable emotionally.

Enough spoke of it that I felt it necessary to include it in this book.



Sisters serve for many reasons. They believe that it is God’s will for them, they want to serve others both spiritually and temporally, and they want the blessings and benefits that come from a mission. Granted, some said they lacked direction prior to their mission, others talked of plans that had not come to pass, while for some it was a last-minute decision. But regardless of their initial reasons for serving, it was seen as an important step prior to marriage and parenthood.

A sister who served in Northern New England in the mid-1990s echoed the feelings of many sisters interviewed for this book when she said: “Before becoming somebody’s wife or mother, I want to become somebody. I want to know who I am first. Serving a mission will help me do that.”

## CHAPTER 11

### SENIOR MISSIONARIES AND OTHER TYPES OF MISSIONARY SERVICE

The youthful sisters and elders aren’t the only Latter-day Saints who volunteer for missionary service. Many retired Church members, like their retired counterparts in wider society, seek new challenges and experiences, and thousands serve in a variety of missionary roles around the world. They include senior couples and senior sisters, and they are in great demand because they typically are faithful, long-standing members who bring a wealth of knowledge and skills to the mission field.

Some engage in proselytizing missions characteristic of younger missionaries, but the majority prefer other types of activities that fall under a broader definition of “mission,” activities that draw on their

training, experience, and special abilities. These can include leadership support for members at the local level, genealogical research, temple work, medical assignments, social and educational services, and serving at visitors' centers and historic sites and in mission offices. While the seniors' numbers pale in comparison to the younger missionaries' (there were around seven thousand serving in 2015), their maturity, commitment, and life experiences make them among the most effective of all missionaries.

Seniors are to conform to the dress and grooming standards that apply to younger missionaries, and, to the extent possible, given their primary assignment, they are to find, friendship, and teach the Latter-day Saint gospel. They do enjoy greater flexibility than younger missionaries: they have some say in what they do, where they serve, and for how long. Their day-to-day schedules are not so rigid. They may take the occasional nap when they feel tired.

They do face special challenges, which limit the numbers who serve. Some have lingering health problems; they worry about what to do with their homes and gardens while they are away; and they miss their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They have also faced financial constraints, because most (until September 2011) paid all of their mission expenses, which could be significant. The recession in the latter part of the 2000s had a negative effect on recruiting seniors, and Church leaders, in an attempt to make senior missionary service more appealing and doable, relaxed some of their expectations regarding how long seniors can or must serve, how flexible their schedules can be, and how much they are expected to pay.

Like younger missionaries, seniors say the positives outweigh the negatives. They are pleased they can be of service to others and to the Church, they serve as parents or grandparents to the younger missionaries, and they enjoy both spiritual and personal growth. It can also be a time of self-discovery. They see that even in their advancing years they can learn new things, do new things, and change in ways they hadn't thought possible.

There are other categories of service that don't fit the traditional picture of a missionary. There are Church-Service Missionaries: people who may work from home or who serve in various capacities at Church sites close to home. Members of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir are considered missionaries, and they are formally set apart for that role. They too are dedicated to supporting the Church and furthering its message, or, as is said, "helping move the work along."

## Senior Missionary Training Center, Provo, Utah

Training for senior missionaries, like training for younger missionaries, has evolved over time. Advances in transportation, communication, and the use of electronic media have made training more efficient, and stays at the Senior Missionary Training Center in Provo have been shortened as a result.

Some things don't change, however: the reasons for going, and the reservations about going, have remained pretty constant over time.

I had the pleasure and unusual opportunity of spending a day at the Senior Missionary Training Center in Provo in April 1994 with the Director of Administrative Services of the MTC. The Senior MTC at that time was located in a renovated motel that had been donated to Brigham Young University. It accommodated up to 150 older missionaries. It was separate from the larger MTC in Provo, and since seniors had more freedom than younger missionaries (the seniors could have cars and come and go as necessary), MTC administrators were just as happy to keep the two groups apart.

I was given a tour of the complex. During our tour I noticed there were older couples and single, senior sisters (a senior sister is defined as forty years of age or older), but there were no older, single men preparing for a senior mission. A General Authority told me they typically don't go on a senior mission; older, single men are needed for other Church callings, especially leadership positions in local churches. He said there also have been problems in the past because women sometimes perceived single men in the mission field as being eligible bachelors, and they pursued them. There had also been issues with older men serving as companions; they didn't always get along too well, living in such close quarters with one another. Single, senior sisters would confirm they faced similar companion issues.

I sat in on classes, interviewed seniors, and ate lunch with recently arrived couples. They had classes in the morning and afternoon, and in the evening they had classes or a devotional with a General Authority. They used the same study materials as the younger missionaries, and young returned missionaries studying at BYU taught them. In 1994, those going on an English-speaking mission stayed less than two weeks, while those learning a language stayed two months.

I interviewed a group of fifteen seniors. As we sat in a circle, I told them they reminded me of Elderhostelers (Elderhostel is an educational program for seniors) and of older continuing-education students with whom I had worked. They were enthusiastic, bright-eyed, and at a point

of transition in their lives when they wanted to do something new and different. They smiled and nodded in agreement. I asked why they were choosing to serve a mission, and their responses included: as a way to show thanks to the Lord for what He had done for them; to serve others; and to help build the Latter-day Saint Church. They also expected to gain spiritual and personal benefits. Some said they felt it would contribute to their salvation, some had just retired and wanted something new and challenging to do, and some, for whom this was their third or fourth mission, said missionary work “was in their blood” and they were going to continue to serve until they could do so no longer. They also felt the mental stimulation was good for them, that it helped stave off dementia.

One sister offered a very personal reason. She said her husband had just died not too long ago, and going on a mission was the right thing to do at that point in her life. Otherwise, she said, she would sit at home and feel sorry for herself. I got a sense of the camaraderie and mutual support of the group when the sister seated next to her reached over and patted her hand.

A couple going to England had other reasons for serving. He was in college during the Korean War, and the Latter-day Saint Church had reached an agreement with the U.S. government that fewer missionaries would serve during that time. Thus he didn’t go. (Restrictions on the number of young men who can serve missions during wartime are common.) He said he had always hoped and dreamed of going, and he was glad he could do it now. His wife added that she had always wanted to serve a mission, but young women weren’t encouraged to do so as she was growing up in the 1930s and 1940s. She was now fulfilling her dream.

Another reason surfaced, which I hadn’t expected, and which was echoed around the room. A member of the family (typically a son or daughter) had drifted away from the Church, and the parents hoped their example of dedication and sacrifice would impress their offspring, such that he or she would become active again in the Church. One couple told of a son who had served a good mission and who was very bright, but who began to question the doctrines of the Church not long after returning home from his mission. He stopped attending, and he remained inactive to that day. They hoped their service would motivate him to start attending again.

“Words haven’t worked,” added a couple from South America, who were going to Italy and whose children had left the Church. “Perhaps our example will get them back into the fold.”

A sister who had been quiet during the session said she faced other issues with her children; they hadn't supported her joining the Latter-day Saint Church or going on a mission. She had raised her large family as a single mother and as a strong member of another religious faith, but when she converted to the Latter-day Saint Church in her early fifties, at least one of her children was "devastated" by her decision and wouldn't speak to her. She was made to feel guilty about going on a mission, because she would miss the wedding of one of her children and the birth of a grandchild. The sister said she was going anyway, because she had been looking forward to it for thirteen years, and if she didn't go then, she probably never would.

Another senior said her children thought that when she turned sixty she should just curl up on the sofa and watch TV. "I might do it at ninety," she quipped, "but for now, I'm going on a mission!"

### **CHAPTER 13**

#### **TRANSITIONS, LEAVING THE CHURCH, AND THE FUTURE OF MISSIONARY WORK**

##### **A Homecoming Story**

A sister from the Northwest, who returned home from her mission in Northern New England, shared her homecoming story. She recalled that as her plane taxied to the gate, the airport windows were filled with signs saying, "Welcome Home, Kate!" There were so many signs that the pilot came on the intercom and said, "It looks like we have a passenger named Kate with us today."

Still wearing her missionary nametag, Kate was quickly identified by her fellow passengers, who encouraged her to be first off the plane.

As she exited, Kate recalled that as she was leaving for her mission eighteen months earlier from this very same airport, she had confided to her mother, "I hope I can do this."

As she entered the terminal and was greeted by her parents, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, and friends, her mother rushed to her—and as they embraced, Kate said through her tears: "I did do it, I did do it, and to the best of my ability. It was hard, very hard, but I was a good missionary."

To which her mother responded, "I knew you would be, Kate. I knew you would be. Welcome home."

M. David Litwa. *Becoming Divine: An Introduction to Deification in Western Culture.*

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2013.

*Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson*

**M.** David Litwa, who earned his doctorate at the University of Virginia and teaches Greek there, describes his book as attempting to “trace the discourse of deification from ancient Egypt all the way to . . . modern America,” thus offering “a general introduction to the topic of deification, in all its diversity” (ix, x). “From the very first time I heard of it until the present day,” he explains, “I have remained strangely fascinated by the idea of deification and its modern import” (x). His focus is on the “West,” which he defines rather generously (though not unreasonably) as including ancient Egypt, Persia, and Palestine, as well as Greece and Europe (2).

Ordered chronologically, the book’s fifteen chapters range from the deification of the great eighteenth-dynasty Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III through the Greco-Roman ruler cults, the Orphic tablets, the “Mithras Liturgy,” and the Hermetic literature, to Friedrich Nietzsche’s atheistic doctrine of human self-deification and the contemporary trans-humanist movement. One chapter treats “Paul and the Gospel of Deification,” a subject that Litwa has discussed at length in his *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul’s Soteriology* (de Gruyter, 2012). Others cover Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, and St. Augustine, as well as the Baghdad Muslim mystic al-Hallaj and the German Dominican thinker Meister Eckhart. The Byzantine theologian St. Gregory Palamas (who wrote of humans as potentially “joint divinities” or “co-gods” with God) and the German Reformer Martin Luther also receive chapter-length examinations.

Obviously, a discussion so wide-ranging and drawing on an impressive array of primary texts risks getting some details wrong. Undeterred, Litwa seems to have done an extraordinarily good job, and he leaves plenty of room for future and deeper examination. He explicitly

acknowledges this: “The project—both for me and for others—is hardly complete. Many more chapters in the history of deification can be written—and will be written, I trust, by a new generation of scholars and theologians who recognize the importance of this topic for our times. . . . If through this book I have done anything to spark interest in the topic of deification and further its research, I rest content” (ix, x). So this is an introductory survey, a collection of summaries. But it’s impressive to see how many varied thinkers have believed in some form of human deification over so long a period of time (roughly the past thirty-five centuries).

There are, of course, multiple concepts of deification, varying widely—and, unsurprisingly, generally correlated very closely with the particular view of God or the gods in question. Some concepts anticipate achieving independent deity, either by human effort or grace or some combination of the two, while others anticipate eventual union with God or teach that we are already one with God and simply need to recognize that fact. “For Plotinus, godhood is attained by moral and physical purification, which he conceives of as the removal of everything alien to us. He uses the image of a sculptor who continually chisels off pieces of marble in order to reveal the lovely face of a cult statue within” (108). Nevertheless, in the manner of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s idea of “family resemblance” (*Familienähnlichkeit*, outlined in the posthumously published 1953 book *Philosophical Investigations*), these widely varying ideas possess overlapping similarities that justify treating them together.

Some commentators have regarded the idea of humans becoming “gods” as the sheerest blasphemy, while others have seen in it the essence of salvation. There can be no dispute, however, about the presence of this doctrine in orthodox Christianity from ancient times. See, for example, these quotations, taken from just one of Litwa’s pages (123): Irenaeus of Lyon (d. AD 202) wrote that Christ “was made what we are to make us what he himself is.” Athanasius of Alexandria (d. AD 373) said that God “was made human so that we might become God.” “God assumed a human being,” said Augustine (d. AD 430), “in order to make human beings gods.” “We have been promised a share in his divinity,” Augustine explained; “The son of God was made a sharer in our mortal nature so that mortals might become sharers in his Godhead.”

For obvious reasons, Latter-day Saint readers will find chapter thirteen, “‘Then Shall They be Gods . . .’: The Mormon Restoration of Deification,” of particular interest. Accurately describing Joseph Smith as “coming out of a Protestant tradition largely tone-deaf to deification” (7),



Litwa does a very creditable job of explaining the Latter-day Saint doctrine of “exaltation,” showing a solid grasp of the relevant materials.

He takes Doctrine and Covenants 76 as the chronological starting point for his historical discussion—a document sometimes overlooked by commentators, who tend to associate the teaching of human exaltation with Nauvoo and, specifically, with the King Follett discourse of twelve years later. “Deification,” he says, “is not a prominent feature of Smith’s early revelations, in particular, the *Book of Mormon*” (197, italics in the original).

But human deification is implied even in the Book of Mormon, which was dictated before the April 1830 organization of the Church: In mathematics, the so-called “transitive property of equality” says that if  $a = b$  and  $b = c$ , then  $a = c$ . At 3 Nephi 28:10, Christ promises three Nephite disciples that “ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one.” Analogously, if those mortal Nephites will someday be like Christ, and Christ is like the Father, they will someday be like the Father. Though rarely emphasized, this verse, which builds directly on 3 Nephi 12:48 and 19:23, seems nonetheless to contain an unmistakable, culminating promise of deified exaltation.

On page 202, Litwa cites nineteenth-century expressions of what may be the single most radically distinctive idea of Mormonism. “Gods, angels and man are all of the same species,” wrote Parley Pratt. “They comprise a great family which is distributed over the whole solar system in the form of colonies, kingdoms, nations, etc. The great decisive difference between one part of this race and the other consists in the differing degrees of intelligence and purity and also in the difference of the spheres, which each of them inhabit, in a series of progressive Being.” Each human being, said John Taylor, is a “God in embryo” who possesses “in an embryonic state all the faculties and powers of a God. And when he shall be perfected, and have progressed to maturity, he will be like his Father—a God. . . . As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate his.” “To outsiders,” says Litwa,

these teachings can admittedly seem like science fiction. Leaving the bizarre<sup>1</sup> aside, however, one must admit that the Mormon doctrine of deification presents something heartwarming. Deification among

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1. Latter-day Saints should not be offended by Litwa’s use of the word *bizarre*: He describes the overall idea of deification itself, to which he’s manifestly drawn, as “ancient and admittedly bizarre” (ix).

the Latter-day Saints is not a matter of the lonely individual buried in contemplation. To become a god, one must become a god *in the midst of family*—as a husband, wife, daughter, son, father, or mother progressing with the family into higher and higher levels of godhood. Mormonism does not so much teach the deification of the individual as the deification of the family and the larger family of the church. Godhood is eternal communion, and the increase of this communion with God and with each other. It is not just the rule and domination of other planets; it is the progression and infinite multiplication of love. (203–4)

This solid, interesting, and readable survey should interest a broad audience of Mormon and other readers.

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Daniel C. Peterson received his PhD at the University of California at Los Angeles and is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University. He is the founder of both the university's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative and the independent Interpreter Foundation. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. His professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology.

Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales. *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*.  
Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2015.

*Reviewed by M. Scott Bradshaw*

In their book *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, authors Brian and Laura Hales provide readers with a concise history of Joseph Smith's practice of plural matrimony. At only 175 pages in length, excluding endnotes and the index, the Hales' work will be both easy to read and informative for the general public. Despite the book's brevity, it is detailed enough to address, or touch on, the full range of controversies associated with this topic. This book is a welcomed condensation of Brian Hales's massive 2013 *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, which is a three-volume set on the same topic.

As in that earlier three-volume set, the authors continue to write from a perspective of faith, as believers in the divine mission given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The authors, who have exhaustively studied this subject, acknowledge that they are not absolutely "bias-free," and they openly affirm their unequivocal witness that Joseph Smith was "a virtuous man and a true prophet of the living God" (xvii).

In *Toward a Better Understanding*, the Hales tell the story of Joseph Smith's plural matrimony with far fewer quotations from source materials than Brian used in his 2013 work. In his earlier work, he wrote more as an editor and backed his assertions with extensive documentation. In this work, Brian and Laura allow themselves to simply tell the story. They write confidently, with a sound grasp of the sources from which their narrative is drawn.

Given the manageable size of this volume, *Toward a Better Understanding* will likely find a broader audience than the prior work, particularly among practicing Latter-day Saints. Through the dissemination of their views, the Hales' interpretation of Joseph's practice of plural matrimony will, over time, have a broad impact on how this chapter in Joseph's life is understood by Latter-day Saints. Brian Hales's influence

in Church history circles is already seen in at least one official LDS Church publication, a thoughtful article entitled “Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo” that is posted on the Church’s website, [lds.org](http://lds.org). Brian Hales is cited more times than any other single author in the footnotes for that piece.

While there certainly is a positive side to the wider availability of information regarding Joseph’s instituting of plural marriage, there are potential risks as well. The concise nature of the narrative in this book could leave readers unprepared for some of the authors’ assertions. As two illustrations of this, Brian and Laura make a brief and conclusory statement that plural marriage was a commandment—as opposed to merely being permitted—among the Saints from the 1840s to 1890 (20). The authors also assert, with regard to post-Manifesto plural marriages (post-1890), that “a few secret plural marriages were authorized each year by the Church President” until 1904 (21). Even if some historians might readily accept these points, a general LDS readership may be puzzled by these statements. Some added explanation or endnote references would be appreciated in such cases.

In telling a balanced and faithful story, the authors might also have been more vigilant to alert readers in a few instances to the possible biases of their sources, particularly where these paint an unflattering picture. Readers may lack the background in LDS history to make their own assessments regarding the inherent bias of some statements. As an example, the authors explain that Emma “turned Fanny [Alger] out of the house” (39) after allegedly learning of Fanny’s relationship with Joseph; Fanny Alger is believed by many to have been Joseph Smith’s first plural bride. While the story may have a ring of truth, the source for this quotation is Ann Eliza Webb, an author whose reliability on the details of this point is questionable. Ann Eliza was the writer of an exposé on life as a plural wife of Brigham Young. She was born in September 1844, almost a decade after the episode involving Fanny Alger, so her knowledge of the events in question is, at best, secondhand. The authors also cite Oliver Cowdery and William McLellin (and others) in telling the Fanny Alger story; yet, these two men penned their comments at times when they were disaffected with, or had left, the LDS Church.

The Hales provide an interesting analogy to help readers understand Joseph Smith’s involvement in plural matrimony. They refer to the story of the brother of Jared in the Book of Mormon, who was commanded by the Lord to build barges to take his people across the ocean. In this familiar account (Ether 2–3), the Lord did not initially provide guidance

on how the occupants of the barges would have light for inside the vessels. The authors see an analogy to Joseph Smith—"the Lord commanded the practice [of plural marriage], but he didn't micromanage its execution" (ix). If the brother of Jared received detailed guidance on how to waterproof his barges, Joseph Smith was not so fortunate; the authors add that Joseph Smith "did not receive such detailed guidelines on how to introduce and live plural marriage" (x). Under this view, it was up to Joseph Smith to decide whom he should propose to and how many wives he would marry, and to instruct and allow others to marry.

While the brother of Jared analogy seems persuasive, one can wonder just how far it should be taken. The authors cite accounts that, collectively taken, would lead readers to conclude that Joseph Smith may actually have been acting under specific divine mandate for each and every proposal of plural marriage. Emily Partridge recounts that when Joseph Smith taught her the doctrine of plural marriage, he "told her that she had been given to him by the Lord" (124). Lucy Walker reports that Joseph told her that marriage to him was "a command of God to [her]" (139). According to Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Joseph explained that she was "created for him before the foundation of the earth was laid" (150). Rhoda Richards comments that she was sealed to Joseph "by his own request, under the inspiration of divine revelation" (164–65). More than a few of Joseph's wives later testified of having experienced sacred dreams, visions, and the appearance of angels as they considered privately whether to accept his proposals. These facts seem to suggest a very personal and direct involvement of God in the details of the early practice of plural marriage among Latter-day Saints.

As well researched as is the work of Brian and Laura Hales, there are still areas that the Hales, and other writers, may want to clarify or explore in future writing. The picture of the legal situation surrounding plural marriage that the book gives is deficient (37, 73). As I have written elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> Joseph actually took surprising steps to legitimize plural marriage in Nauvoo. Quite simply, good arguments can be made for the legality of Nauvoo plural marriage under Nauvoo and Illinois law. Similarly, Joseph's frequently cited performance of the Ohio civil marriage of Newell and Lydia Knight in 1835 was actually performed with full

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1. M. Scott Bradshaw, "Defining Adultery under Illinois and Nauvoo Law," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters*, edited by Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2014), 401–26.

legal authority. Joseph seems to have understood this. The legal status of Ohio civil marriages and Nauvoo plural marriages performed by Joseph Smith should no longer be used by historians to support assertions that Joseph Smith's actions were based solely on priesthood authority, disregarding the marital laws or conventions of his day.

Another area for future study would be the text of D&C 132. A more thorough analysis of this scripture may yield clues that can help us unravel the story surrounding Joseph's practice of plural marriage. An example is seen in the phrase "by me or by my word" which is repeated exactly, or in similar form, in five verses (12, 13, 15, 18, and 19) as part of the conditions under which marriages are, or are not, valid for eternity. The authors conclude that Joseph's marriage to Fanny Alger could only have been "for time" (37) since it likely took place before Elijah restored the sealing power to Joseph in April 1836. However, since God sent an angel in 1834 (18–19) commanding Joseph to practice plural marriage, Joseph's relationship with Fanny Alger certainly could have been approved by God or according to God's word, thus we should not automatically conclude it was for "time" only, even if it likely occurred before the restoration of the sealing keys by Elijah. Perhaps one should not hastily conclude much, one way or the other, about the relationship between Joseph and Fanny. As Joseph earlier learned with the repeated appearances of Moroni in the space of less than twenty-four hours (JS–H 1:30–49), and as Peter learned when he experienced the same vision three times (Acts 10:9–16), words repeated multiple times by Deity should be remembered, recorded, and carefully pondered. In this instance, a study of the pattern of repetition in verses 12, 13, 15, 18, and 19 may reveal fresh insight on the topic.

Another avenue for future research could be in matching the known, day-by-day whereabouts of Joseph Smith to that of his presumed plural brides. Brian and Laura Hales no doubt correctly conclude that conjugal visits between Joseph and his plural wives must have been a rarity (69). Further in-depth research might establish this case with greater certainty.

Overall, the Hales have left readers, once again, with a solid contribution toward the understanding of Joseph's practice of plural marriage; however, no book on this subject can ever be complete or 100 percent reliable. Neither Joseph nor Emma left any account of their involvement in this difficult, very personal, and sensitive aspect of their lives and their relationship. Without Joseph and Emma's versions of events, historians are left to sift through fragments of evidence, piecing together

the most reliable narrative possible. The Hales deserve credit for undertaking this challenging and controversial task. In time, perhaps some of their conclusions will be revisited and refined. Despite limitations, the Hales have left us with an interpretation of Joseph's practice of plural marriage that is basically sound, one that tends to show Joseph as a principled man who acted in obedience to divine command.

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M. Scott Bradshaw received his JD in 1989 from Brigham Young University and is a lawyer and researcher specializing in the laws surrounding the early history of the Church. He is in private practice and has been employed by the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Articles by Bradshaw include "Defining Adultery under Illinois and Nauvoo Law," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters*, ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2014), 401–26; and "Joseph Smith's Performance of Marriages in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 23–69.

Craig Harline. *Way Below the Angels: The Pretty Clearly Troubled but Not Even Close to Tragic Confessions of a Real Live Mormon Missionary.*

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014.

*Reviewed by Lisa Torcasso Downing*

On the surface, *Way Below the Angels: The Pretty Clearly Troubled but Not Even Close to Tragic Confessions of a Real Live Mormon Missionary* is just another missionary memoir, but with an exceptionally long title. We've read it before; many of us have lived it, this archetypal Mormon hero's journey. Harline's version of what he terms the "One True Missionary Story" goes like this: a young Californian intercepts his mission call somewhere between the mail truck and the mailbox, rips open the envelope and then looks up Belgium on a world map. He shows up at the MTC in the traditional superhero suit of iron, ready to save souls. After a few weeks of language lessons, off he flies to Belgium—land of waffles and Brussels sprouts—where both bicycles and converts fail and where Mother Nature weeps. A lot. But in spite of all that typical missionary stuff, *Way Below the Angels* stands way above most missionary memoirs. Its plot may be typical, and it does trade a little in some romantic didacticism, but under Harline's care the typical missionary tale turns platitudes into perspective and demonstrates with humor that the most vital soul God wants us to save is our own.

Harline's memoir succeeds because it helps its reader encounter painful realities with a smile. As expected, we go with Elder Harline through the streets of Belgium. Doors slam, dogs bite, and old men garner the strength to throw young male missionaries across their thresholds. We see Elder Harline study, fast, and pray as he devotes himself to the destruction of what he calls "the great and abominable church." But we also see him discover that the desire to love and the desire to spoil are like oil and water; they cannot mix.

For instance, near the conclusion of the memoir, Harline recounts his deep affection for Raymond, a Holocaust survivor, and his wife, Yvonne. Through these two people, whom he dubs the "most magical" of all Belgianlanders, Harline experiences both resistance to the



restored gospel and an intensity of goodness he can hardly comprehend. In tribute to them, Harline writes:

[M]y understanding of what goodness was didn't any longer come from studying any list of 113 or however many rules my particular culture said really and truly constituted goodness. . . . It was a total shock to me, realizing that—a shock on the level of Peter's when God told him that Gentiles weren't unclean after all, or of people when they saw Jesus touching beggars and unwanted children and sinners and lepers. I not only was shocked to feel goodness that big, but I especially was shocked to feel it in a place so far away among a bunch of strangers speaking a strange language and almost all belonging to the great and abominable church of the devil. . . . I'd have bet . . . I was there enlightening and saving them, but now it looked like they were enlightening and saving me. (234–35)

Harline's experiences remind us how easy it can be to misunderstand the kind of service, devotion, and respect our God seeks from us.

Although this memoir can be touching and even funny, it is not a feel-good tale of triumph. Triumph isn't in the cards for Elder Harline. He may know the final missionary discussion by heart, but he never gets to deliver it. He blazed into Belgium, determined to baptize a very specific and inspired number of converts (eighty-four to be exact), but leaves the country as Catholic as it was when he arrived. However, over and over, in large things and small, Harline reminds us that failure is not a disaster, but a redirection, one we can choose to fret over or embrace with a self-deprecating grin.

*Way Below the Angels* isn't for every Latter-day Saint. Some may be discomfited by its candid consideration of both the strengths and weaknesses in the organized missionary efforts of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Others may balk when they encounter the thematic corporate metaphor for the Church. Harline conspicuously and consistently refers to missionaries as "local businessmen" with a product to sell. Those of us who are familiar with critics of Mormonism are accustomed to accusations that the formal Church runs more like a business than a charity. But Harline uses the salesman metaphor to denote the zeal, good faith, and perseverance that propels young Latter-day Saint men and women to embark on lengthy missions, and, more impressively, to stay when the going gets rough. Harline does not speak of young missionaries as "local businessmen" in a pejorative manner. Rather, the term is both affectionate and self-conscious, as if the Harline of today is remembering with compassion the strange mixture of ego and naïveté that defined young Elder Harline and made him get up in the early morning hours, day after day, to "sell" religion on doorsteps in much the same way that school children sell magazine subscriptions.

Elder Harline's missionary work was, at times, soul-crushing in its rejection, and as he prepares to leave Belgium for home, the main thing he seems to pack is guilt: guilt that he hadn't done enough, that he hadn't been effective, that sometimes he felt sorry for himself, or frustrated and angry because the locals didn't appreciate him or his message. In spite of this, Harline leaves Belgium the same way he came—as a faithful, devoted, believing member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What changes in him is not his degree of belief, but his understanding of the deep divinity of that belief and how the cultural façade some have built to enshrine Mormon theology struggles to measure up to the message within.

One of the last things Elder Harline does in Belgium is follow through on promises made to two non-LDS contacts to visit, respectively, the Sunday worship services of their churches—one Catholic, one Protestant. The beauty of each experience throttles young Harline by surprise. He writes:

It always bugged the heck out of me when people would say to us, *Oh, religions are all the same*, because the whole point of me and every other missionary being there in Belgium was to show that no they weren't. But then when I went inside these two other churches to check them out for myself, I had to at least admit that by focusing so much on all the differences I sure had missed all the sameness. (246)

It is conceivable that some Latter-day Saints may interpret a sentiment like that as minimizing the unique power of the restored gospel. However, Harline's intention doesn't appear to be one of reduction, but rather a celebration of the common, divine elements that tie us together as children of the same God, regardless of our individual faith practices.

*Way Below the Angels: The Pretty Clearly Troubled but Not Even Close to Tragic Confessions of a Real Live Mormon Missionary* is worth reading—twice. The first read is charming, humorous, and, at times, laserlike in its ability to dissect the foibles of evangelical Mormonism. Certainly, Harline's witticism defies our expectation of serious, contemplative literature, but this is not a memoir constructed on the fly by an amateur writer. When read closely, it reveals itself as a well-crafted, well-timed revelation about how one man's failure becomes victory in the eyes of God.

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Lisa Torcasso Downing teaches composition for Collin College and is an author of young adult fiction. She serves as the fiction editor for *Sunstone Magazine* and has also served as the fiction editor for *Irreantum*. She resides in north Texas with her family.

W. Paul Reeve. *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness.*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Russell W. Stevenson. *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013.*

Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014.

*Reviewed by Patrick Q. Mason*

Mormonism's fraught relationship with American and global racial diversity remains for many observers and believers one of the religion's most troubling aspects. The most perplexing aspect of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' historically racist policies was overturned in 1978 when the Church leadership granted priesthood ordination to all worthy men regardless of color or racial background, and allowed all qualifying members, without respect to race, to enter its temples. Yet the Church and its members continue to wrestle with the legacy of those policies and the flotilla of race-based theological pronouncements assembled and deployed particularly during the religion's first century-and-a-half. Recent decades have witnessed the consistent output of outstanding and truly significant scholarship on Mormonism and race, mostly but not exclusively focusing on the black-white divide.<sup>1</sup> In late 2015, the Tanner Humanities Center at the University of Utah convened a major conference examining the "evolving status of black Saints within the Mormon fold."<sup>2</sup> For its part, the LDS Church has recently published an official online essay denouncing racism of any form and repudiating past theories taught

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1. For a few key examples, see Lester E. Bush, "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Spring 1973): 11–68; Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Blacks within Mormonism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing, 1981); and Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

2. For details, see Tanner Humanities Center, "Black, White, and Mormon, 08–09 Oct 2015," <http://thc.utah.edu/lectures-programs/bwm-conference/>.

in the Church to support racialist policies.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in its ubiquitous “I’m a Mormon” ad campaign, the Church has gone to pains to demonstrate—and perhaps exaggerate—the degree to which it has become a racially and ethnically inclusive body of Saints.

Two significant additions to this ongoing conversation are Russell Stevenson’s book *For the Cause of Righteousness* and Paul Reeve’s *Religion of a Different Color*. Both award-winning authors, Stevenson is currently a doctoral student in African history at Michigan State University, and Reeve is a professor of history at the University of Utah. Although their books deal with the relationship of Mormonism and race and overlap in certain key respects—notably coverage of the origins and impact of the LDS priesthood-temple ban—in fact the two books are as different as they are similar. Stevenson offers a mostly linear history of LDS racial policies and how blacks who came to believe in Mormonism’s precepts, both in the United States and beyond, sought to navigate the biases of the institution, its leaders, and members. Reeve goes beyond the more traditional narrative of Mormons’ views of racial minorities (especially blacks and Native Americans) to consider how those racial beliefs were constructed as a dialectic alongside the racialization of Mormons by non-LDS outsiders, particularly in the nineteenth century. In its sophisticated conversation with whiteness theory and the history of American race relations, Reeve’s book is the more innovative and theoretically ambitious of the two, though both have important merits.

By way of full disclosure, I reviewed an advance manuscript of *Religion of a Different Color* and provided a blurb for the back cover in which I said, “With prodigious research and a keen eye for detail, context, and irony, Paul Reeve masterfully guides us through the fickleness and combustibility of nineteenth-century American racial discourse, with Mormons as his unlikely subjects.” I can add to that endorsement by saying that *Religion of a Different Color* is a true historical tour de force. It instantly joins the elite ranks of the Mormon studies canon, becoming required reading for anyone interested in the Mormon past (or present). The book’s utility goes far beyond Mormon studies, however, as it should also be consulted by scholars of whiteness and American race relations as an expert analysis of how religion impacted and was impacted by the national discourse about race.

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3. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Race and the Priesthood,” <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>.

Reeve uses as his point of departure a cartoon published in *Life* magazine in 1904 depicting a “Mormon Elder-Berry”—with his long beard looking suspiciously like Church President Joseph F. Smith, then in the national news in connection with the Senate’s Reed Smoot hearings—out for a walk with his numerous children, who collectively display a panoply of racial, ethnic, and national diversity. As Reeve mentions, the cartoon “was part of an effort to trap Mormons in a racially suspect past” even at the moment that Church leaders sought to legitimate the religion’s place in American society (2). Reeve’s key insight is that historians have not fully taken into account the ways in which “Protestants believed Mormons were physically different” (3). Thus, Reeve convincingly argues, the “whiteness” of Mormons and Mormonism is best examined “as a contested variable, not an assumed fact” (7). In the ensuing eight chapters, Reeve deftly examines the perception, proposed by outsiders and insiders alike, that Mormonism constituted not merely a new religion but also a new race. He spends two chapters reflecting on LDS relationships with Native Americans and the ways in which opponents “imagined Mormons conspiring with Indians against white Americans and sometimes descending below the level of savages themselves” (11). Another chapter considers the “orientalization” of Mormonism, with polygamy as the key factor in linking the overwhelmingly Euro-American Mormons with the “barbaric” and “despotic” Muslims, Turks, and Chinese. These are outstanding chapters, each displaying assiduous research, careful analysis, and broad context. I was particularly fascinated as Reeve showed how the “nits make lice” comment made by a perpetrator to justify his murder of a child in the Hawn’s Mill Massacre had a long history in Anglo-American racial discourse (52–55).

Its other achievements notwithstanding, the greatest contribution of *Religion of a Different Color* is in its quartet of chapters entitled “Black, White, and Mormon.” Here Reeve offers a master class in contextualization, close readings of texts, simultaneous clarity and complexity, subtle and nuanced argumentation, and the interweaving of Mormon and American history. Chapter 5 is, simply put, the single best account and explanation, from an academic viewpoint, of the origins of the LDS priesthood ban. Reeve carefully excavates and analyzes the earliest available manuscript sources, revealing the internal contestations and instabilities within Mormon racial discourse in the 1840s and early 1850s. Brigham Young, Parley Pratt, and others are portrayed

here not as stock characters or villains but rather as mid-nineteenth-century white men who were constructing their religion at the same time that they were writing Utah's territorial laws regarding "servitude" in the context of a national conversation about the impending threat of "white slavery." What emerges is a story more tragic than nefarious: "Mormons legalized their own version of black servitude in an effort to distinguish between black and white, bound and free. At the same time, Brigham Young announced a race-based priesthood restriction partly intended to substantiate Mormon racial purity" (142).

In Reeve's careful and sensitive portrayal, it's like watching a slow-motion car crash as we witness the real if complicated interracialism of 1830s–1840s Mormonism descend into something far more terrestrial, with culture-bound racism and fears of interracial sex and marriage outweighing a commitment to the universalist impulses of the gospel of Jesus Christ declared in both the New Testament and Book of Mormon. Keeping Mormon racial views and the racialization of Mormons in constant dialogue, Reeve provides in chapter 6 a nuanced analysis of how the Mormons' adoption of plural marriage was seen by many as a type of "race treason." That the critics' logic was bad—practicing a "peculiar" form of marriage and sexuality does not equate to the adoption of all manner of supposed depravity—did not prevent it from becoming a powerful discourse used to racialize and thereby marginalize Mormonism and its adherents, who in turn did all in their power to prove their whiteness. In grasping so earnestly for the cultural respectability afforded in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America by the achievement of whiteness, Mormons conflated race, purity, and citizenship, and set aside the integrating impulses of their own theology.

Russell Stevenson's book, *For the Cause of Righteousness*, is commendable in taking the story of Mormonism and race beyond America's shores and including far more than the usual suspects. In addition to detailing the familiar narrative of ecclesiastical racial exclusion, Stevenson also introduces us here to an expanded and truly impressive cast of characters: William Daniels, the unordained black branch president in South Africa; Moses Mahlangu, who attended Church for fourteen years before he was allowed to be baptized; Rebecca Mould, the charismatic Ghanaian leader; and Julie Mavimbela, the South African whose commitment to Mormon principles inspired her to found the organization Women for Peace. Stevenson is a document hound in the best tradition of Mormon historians, and readers will benefit considerably

from the book's second part, which includes over 150 pages of reprinted primary source documents with brief editorial introductions. However, the author's prodigious talent for research sometimes becomes a liability. He seemed intent on including in the book every scrap he discovered in the archives, with the inclusion of material seemingly taking priority over the judicious selection and careful organization of sources.

I was duly impressed by the substance and quality of material that Stevenson compiled in his research, but found myself repeatedly distracted by stylistic matters. The prose often jumps from topic to topic or source to source without clear transitions. A source or event is sometimes mentioned in passing, without full explication or explanation. For instance, "Martin" is mentioned on page 129 but not actually introduced as Wynetta Martin, the first black member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, until page 143. A long section on the white LDS adventurer John Goddard (93–101) is interesting but adds little to chapter 4, and in fact distracts from the narrative about Mormonism in Africa, since religion was seemingly epiphenomenal for Goddard. Indeed, the entire second half of that chapter is about whites (not blacks) in Africa. The chapter's subtitle is "From Aba to Detroit," but Detroit does not figure until an oblique reference in the chapter's last sentence.

The book's gaps are sometimes substantive as well as stylistic. Chapter 5 is all about white Utahans' views of civil rights, blacks, and the priesthood-temple ban, with African Americans appearing as objects, not subjects. This may have been done intentionally, to demonstrate the dynamics of power in which blacks were often silenced in conversations and policies made about them, but if that was his aim Stevenson does not explicitly say as much. Throughout the book the reader is often left wanting more from tantalizing but only briefly mentioned nuggets. For instance, chapter 7—which otherwise includes excellent information about the assimilation of independent Ghanaian congregations into the LDS Church—only remarks in passing on how temple ceremonies were racially integrated even in apartheid-era South Africa. Prime opportunities for critical analysis are frequently missed, such as the chance to reflect further in chapter 7 on the complicated dynamic between African female charismatic and American male institutional authority. The book rushes to the end of its story, containing relatively little history of the past quarter century beyond the collection of a few Church statements and the dedication of the temple in Ghana. All this suggests a manuscript that was somewhat hastily written by the author and not

thoroughly edited by the publisher. A more careful, patient approach would no doubt have addressed many of the book's most easily correctable shortcomings.

As mentioned, the documents reprinted in the latter half of *For the Cause of Righteousness* are themselves worth the price of purchase—though it must be acknowledged that, through no fault of the author, this collection's distinctiveness has been somewhat undermined by the subsequent publication of an entire documentary history of blacks and Mormonism.<sup>4</sup> Still, there are a number of gems here that are well worth readers' attention, including Eunice Kinney's letter regarding Elijah Abel (217–21); Jane James's pathos-drenched autobiography and letters (222–27, 284–85); Brigham Young's various statements on race (252–54, 261–67); the inspiring testimony of Alabama convert Len Hope (299–302); the Lowry Nelson correspondence, along with the First Presidency's mid-twentieth-century statements (304–12); and ensuing statements by David O. McKay, Sterling McMurrin, and the First Presidency that trace the evolution of the priesthood-temple ban from a doctrine to a policy with “unknown” origins (317, 320, 334).

Despite my critiques, *For the Cause of Righteousness* is a valuable and welcome addition to our understanding of the rich, diverse, and complex history of Mormonism. Scholars will for many years refer to and build upon Stevenson's insights. He has offered a useful critique not only of the religion's racial shortcomings but also of Mormon scholars' near-exclusive attention on the American scene. Those of us in the profession have long noted that one of the next frontiers of Mormon studies must be more thorough attention to nonwhite and non-American voices, contexts, themes, and trends. Hats off to Stevenson for answering the call.

When placed side by side, these two books put into stark relief the differences in approach and achievement between a graduate student and a seasoned historian. *For the Cause of Righteousness* is the product of a talented young scholar who dove into the archives and seems to have come out in a hurry with something important to say. *Religion of a Different Color* is the product of a careful, mature, patient, and highly skilled craftsman expertly plying his trade. Emerging scholars

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4. Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst, eds., *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).



of Stevenson's caliber should be encouraged and indeed celebrated. At the same time, Reeve, the consummate professional, has upped the ante for Mormon studies by producing a genuinely important book that will stand the test of time.

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Patrick Q. Mason is Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies and Associate Professor of Religion at Claremont Graduate University. He is the author of *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*, editor of *Directions in Mormon Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, and co-editor of *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism since 1945*.

Thomas G. Alexander. *Edward Hunter Snow: Pioneer—Educator—Statesman*. Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 2012.

*Reviewed by Benjamin A. Johnson*

Thomas Alexander, prominent historian of the American West and author of *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* and *Things in Heaven and Earth: The Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff, a Mormon Prophet*, has completed a well-researched biography of Edward Hunter Snow (1865–1932), one of the early home-grown leaders of St. George, Utah.

Son of Julia Spencer Snow and Apostle Erastus Snow, Edward was a second-generation Mormon pioneer. Erastus was appointed to lead colonizing efforts to southern Utah in 1852 and, in the next decade, promoted self-reliance by encouraging efforts to raise subtropical crops in the “Cotton Mission.” Edward built on this pioneer heritage. He maintained his father’s entrepreneurial spirit (such as by founding the Bank of St. George and the Southern Utah Telephone Company), served as a Utah state senator, played a key part in the first-ever Utah State Tax Commission, helped found what is now Dixie State University, and served as St. George Stake president, assisting Mormons with both spiritual and temporal challenges.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the pioneer community of St. George had become the most important city in southern Utah. Edward was a progressive force in the area, setting ambitious goals and bringing the cotton colony out of isolation. As Alexander points out, “Utah’s Dixie was no place for the weak” (26). The desert climate certainly challenged Edward’s abilities. His goals as stake president were far more civic oriented than the goals of stake presidents today, including setting up electricity and a water system, securing an ice plant, and creating a high school for St. George. In the foreword, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, a St. George native, states, “Men like Edward H. Snow, who could have prospered and excelled anywhere he chose to live, chose to live in

Dixie.” Elder Holland continues, “In that generation Edward H. Snow is by all reckoning the principal leader of those who stayed and soldiered on to bring educational, commercial, cultural, and religious maturity to a setting that had seemed so hostile to all such hopes” (10).

Alexander charts the life of Edward chronologically, but starts by providing forty-one pages of context before discussing him in much detail. Alexander chronicles Erastus’s role through early Church history, including Erastus’s marriages, his exodus from western Illinois in 1846, his part in “the first pioneer company on its journey to the Salt Lake Valley” on July 21, 1847, and his role in helping to “promote self-sufficiency” in the Iron Mission in Parowan and Cedar City (21–22). Some readers may find it challenging to wade through what may appear to be gratuitous familial or genealogical context of Edward’s aunts, uncles, grandparents, and great-grandparents, while others may be thankful for this context and appreciate the carefully researched background for understanding Edward. Alexander points out, “The Snows were a dynasty of pioneers in business, education, religion, and philanthropy,” owning farms, mills, and storage centers (15).

Interestingly, Alexander’s narrative highlights the Snow’s family history that spans significant events during the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, broaching such topics as polygamy, Erastus’s involvement in the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, and his involvement in negotiations with the federal government during the Utah War in 1858. Alexander also provides amusing sidelights by depicting, albeit sometimes briefly, humorous incidents involving chamber pots, spankings, unmarried transient couples looking for a quick wedding, and embarrassing moments when General Authorities stayed at the Snow house (30, 250–52).

Edward’s education included classes from prominent professors Karl G. Maeser and James. E. Talmage at Brigham Young Academy, and he graduated with a degree in 1884 after three years of study. He taught school, became superintendent of county schools, and chaired state and civic organizations, including the board of trustees of Dixie College, the Utah State Tax Commission, and the Washington County Red Cross. As a state senator, Edward was unsuccessful in obtaining support for a teachers college in Beaver but proudly introduced legislation to establish what would eventually become Southern Utah University in Cedar City. Clearly, Edward was interested in helping others gain access to quality education.

In an era when it was not uncommon for young male Mormon missionaries to leave wives and children to serve, Edward left for the Southern States Mission nine months after marrying Sarah Hannah Nelson. During the nineteen months that he was away, Edward was partially supported by his young wife, who worked as a seamstress for a dollar a day. Erastus also contributed financially to support his son's mission efforts. According to Alexander, Hannah "suffered from depression" and performed in community plays to help her cope with her husband's absence. She had been concerned that Edward would take on another wife while he was on his mission. To this, Edward replied that he had "no disposition" for it, and he never did join in plural marriage (58). Alexander compares Edward and Sarah's account with others who served in the same mission. "It seems probable," Alexander continues, "that many of the wives suffered from depression caused by separation, increased responsibilities, and loneliness as Hannah did, and that they had a difficult time helping to support their husbands in the mission field" (69).

After his mission, when Lorenzo Snow, a distant cousin, visited St. George in May 1899 and delivered his now-famous sermon on the value of tithing that could open up the windows of heaven, Edward was finishing up his service as stake tithing clerk (1889–1899)—a powerful and salaried position at this time that included the collection and appraisal of in-kind goods. Edward also played a financial role at the state constitutional convention, helping to institute Utah's income tax and to modernize Utah State government as it progressed toward statehood.

Drawing extensively and often primarily from Edward's own sources, including Edward's journals, correspondence, and autobiography, Alexander skillfully summarizes and analyzes episodes from Edward's life. Alexander draws information from a non-Mormon visitor to Edward's home and thoughtfully compares information from mission journals with that of Edward's correspondence, showing that, for example, Edward did not mention to his wife how ill he actually was or his "confrontation with the Klu Klux Klan" (58). Alexander's other sources include guided tours, emails, interviews, and government documents, as well as sources from the Church History Library and BYU Special Collections. Footnotes serve to discuss the author's disagreement with some sources, to explain Latter-day Saint jargon for those who may be unfamiliar with certain terms, and to provide concise descriptions and references for further reading.

Sometimes shifts between time periods within the text's body take over the flow of the narrative. For example, the text vacillates between Edward's experience as a boy and his early adult life at the Normal School at Brigham Young Academy (38–41). There are a few distracting editing mistakes, and sometimes Alexander is a bit too abrupt in his treatment. For example, when he describes an instance in which Edward was asked about why Mormons practice polygamy, he writes, "Edward explained the reason," but Alexander does not further elaborate (53). For the reader, a little more explanation here as to what specific reasons were given or an acknowledgement that those reasons are unknown could help.

Overall, Thomas Alexander's treatment of Edward Snow is detailed, informative, and sometimes even amusing. Readers will appreciate *Edward Hunter Snow's* useful photographs and illustrations, such as the map of St. George and its vicinity (280–81). Including a basic map of the whole of southern Utah might have helped further situate the geographic context for the reader, and including a timeline would have been useful for keeping track of the major events and roles in Edward's life. While there are some limitations, *Edward Hunter Snow* significantly contributes to the growing body of literature on the development of Southern Utah and second-generation Mormon pioneers around the turn of the twentieth century.

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Benjamin A. Johnson is Assistant Professor and Assistant Department Chair in the Department of Student Leadership and Success Studies at Utah Valley University. He received his PhD from Ohio State University in 2013, and his teaching and research interests include the history and philosophy of education. He has published with journals such as *Educational Theory*, *Teachers College Record*, and *History of Education Quarterly*.

*By Divine Design: Best Practices for Family Success and Happiness*, edited by Brent L. Top and Michael A. Goodman (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014)

In *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*, the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaim that the responsibilities and joys of marriage, parenting, and family life are given to men and women “by divine design.” Using this phrase to set the tone for their edited volume, this book’s editors further subtitle this selection of twelve articles a compendium of “best practices” designed to promote family success and happiness. The edited collection was developed under the guidance of Brent L. Top, dean of Religious Education and professor of Church history and doctrine, and Michael A. Goodman, associate professor of Church history and doctrine, both of Brigham Young University.

“Best practices” in fields ranging from education to management refer to principle-based approaches that are useful, enduring, and meaningful in facilitating growth and success. Many a spouse or parent has wondered how best to resolve an interpersonal conflict or provide helpful support to a family member in times of difficulty. In this volume, the authors were encouraged to draw upon and integrate essential teachings from scripture and prophetic leaders with sound findings from social science to make clear and apply such best practices to family life. The contributors include a range of scholars and educators from marriage, family and human development, sociology, psychology, and religious education at Brigham Young University.

This collection of twelve articles has been edited carefully, and each chapter

presents an accessible, interesting, and practical profile of its family topic, enriched by color photos and relevant summaries of scientific data or gospel-related teachings. The volume opens with a chapter on a common family struggle, seeking harmony in family life in a busy, chaotic world. The next three chapters focus on sustaining a healthy marriage, with articles that address the role of faith and commitment in marriage; time challenges and couple rituals in marriage; and marriage, divorce, and covenant-keeping in the LDS community. The remaining eight chapters explore multiple dimensions of the parenting experience. One chapter on parenting provides an in-depth discussion of raising children based on the key principles of latitude, limits, and love. Other chapters explore the unique roles of women and men as parents, with one focused on the mothering experience in our modern world and its key contributions, while the other addresses “faithful fathering” and vital elements of how fathers can reach for success in family life. Another chapter explores the transmission of faith to children and best practices in cultivating a healthy religious environment in the home that will bless children. The last four chapters focus on parenting teenagers and young adults, and include explorations of specific and proactive parenting practices for teens, raising teens to overcome selfishness and indulgence, helping young adults transition into the key domains of adult life, and selected parental practices for navigating the challenges of raising “emerging” adults.

In a world where trustworthy information can be difficult to find, this volume presents a useful compilation that blends spiritual perspectives with sound research findings. If readers are indeed interested in finding “family success

and happiness,” this book will provide them with an understanding of contemporary challenges in family life and a broad set of “best practices” that can be understood and applied in strengthening marriage, improving parenting, and enriching family relationships.

—Sean Brotherson

*The First Vision: A Harmonization of 10 Accounts from the Sacred Grove* by Matthew B. Christensen (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2014)

The First Vision of Joseph Smith is one of the defining moments in the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With it began the Restoration of the gospel and the reopening of the communication between God and his children. Even after the contributions of scholars such as Milton V. Backman, James B. Allen, John W. Welch, and Steven C. Harper, most Latter-day Saints are familiar with only the canonized account of this vision recorded in Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price. However, there are other accounts of it recorded by Joseph Smith as well as other secondary sources.

In this short book that is also filled with beautiful illustrations, Matthew B. Christensen attempts to do something that many agree is long overdue: harmonize ten different accounts of the First Vision into one comprehensive account. He begins his book by providing certain criteria that helped him decide which accounts he should or should not use in this harmony. Basically, he chose to use only those that were recorded during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, resulting in ten accounts. He then goes on to summarize each of them, briefly discussing their origins, authors, and content. After these summaries, he describes his method

of bringing the accounts together into one, and his organizational plan, which is essentially to keep the canonized version as the “core melody,” and to have the other nine accounts as “accompaniment” in the “harmony” (9). He also notes the limitations to such a task, and comments that though he has tried to ensure a fair portrayal of all the accounts, he is aware that there may be some human error evident in the final outcome.

After these introductory sections, Christensen provides the reader with a color key, which assigns a specific color to each of the different accounts so as to aid the reader when going through the harmony. The next pages contain the harmony itself, and it is in these pages that the reader will be able to read the many different accounts of the First Vision as one flowing version. After this harmony, he offers a short conclusion, including a small section with an invitation from Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon with their promise of a personal witness to the truthfulness of their testimonies.

Those interested in a better understanding of Joseph Smith’s First Vision, member of the Church or not, will find this an informative read. It offers a new approach to all of the various accounts of the First Vision and uncovers some of the lesser-known details and thoughts of Joseph before, during, and after the event. As a result, it is more varied than the canonized version and even includes a section where all of Christ’s words from the different accounts are together at one time. Visitors at the new exhibition in Salt Lake City at the Church History Museum entitled “The Heavens Are Open” will also encounter a shorter but similar harmonization in the dramatic presentation of the First Vision there.

While it is helpful to see the various accounts harmonized as one, readers will also benefit from Christensen’s

encouragement that all readers undertake a serious study of all the different accounts separately. *The First Vision* is best seen in this light; it is an aid to help curious readers learn and be uplifted by the unified accounts and to encourage them to seek out more involved research about the accounts. Ultimately, *The First Vision* is intended to strengthen testimony and show that the different accounts are indeed harmonious and accordant.

—Kimball Gardner

*Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium, 14 May 2011*, edited by Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014)

*Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference: "The Temple on Mount Zion," 22 September 2012*, edited by Matthew B. Brown, William J. Hamblin, and David Rolph Seely (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014)

*Ancient Temple Worship* and *Temple Insights* are both compilations of works by various authors and published as proceedings of symposia organized by the late Matthew B. Brown, who was an author and historian writing for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, and the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research. Readers that have ever been mystified by temple symbolism, ancient temples, or modern temple worship will find these books helpful in their pursuit of understanding.

By a thorough analysis of scriptures and historical evidence, *Ancient Temple*

*Worship* helps readers make connections between ancient worldviews and temple worship. Topics explore the symbolic meaning of measuring tools, hand gestures, the tabernacle, sacred tree iconography, and the Holy of Holies. The book includes broader topics such as the genetics of indigenous populations and how that relates to the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

*Temple Insights* will enhance readers' understanding and appreciation of current temples, but in doing so, readers are treated to a panorama of temple worship throughout time and place. The book stands as a witness that the pre-exilic Hebrews understood the temple concept to originate with Adam, not Moses, which understanding is reflected in Joseph Smith's teachings. Articles also provide insights on temple worship by exploring temples in the Book of Mormon. *Temple Insights* was dedicated to Matthew B. Brown after his sudden death, which occurred before Brown finished organizing the conference upon which this book is based.

These two books serve as a fitting dedication to Brown's love of and appreciation for the temple, along with its symbolism and worship. Brown's lifelong study and tireless interest in sacred things, which developed into a deep devotion for temple worship, is reflected in the wide-ranging scholarship that the authors undertook in his honor.

Both books enrich previous Latter-day Saint writings on temple symbolism and worship. Readers are brought up to date on how scholars are interacting with such works as *Temple and Cosmos*, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, *Temples in the Ancient World*, *One Eternal Round*, and *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*. On the pages of *Ancient Temple Worship* and *Temple Insights* are found new perspectives about ancient texts and



objects that were used in temple worship. No doubt these new insights will give patrons something to contemplate as they seek inspiration in modern temples.

—BYU Studies Editors

*The Prophet and the Reformer: The Letters of Brigham Young and Thomas L. Kane*, edited by Matthew J. Grow and Ronald W. Walker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Matthew J. Grow is the director of publications for the LDS Church History Department and is the author of *Liberty to the Downtrodden*, which is a biography of Thomas L. Kane. Ronald W. Walker, formerly a professor of history at Brigham Young University, is a prolific writer and Latter-day Saint historian. These two join their considerable talents and expertise to bring readers *The Prophet and the Reformer: The Letters of Brigham Young and Thomas L. Kane*.

Brigham Young was of course essential to the development of the Mormon community in Utah during the mid to late 1800s, both as a political and religious leader. In 1846, Brigham Young met Thomas L. Kane, an idealistic Philadelphia reformer, and he often relied on Kane for advice, political or otherwise, resulting in a rich correspondence over many years. Kane was a friend to and a public supporter of the early Saints and became known as the most important non-Mormon in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The unique camaraderie between Young and Kane led to many letters

that are filled with valuable historical information and that give glimpses into their personal views, which are not widely known. Preceding every letter in *The Prophet and the Reformer* is a commentary by Matthew J. Grow and Ronald W. Walker, who elaborate on the historical context and provide readers with insights into the lives of Young and Kane. Readers will enjoy learning more about the lives of these two great men in Mormon history, as well as the various political upheavals and cultural tensions during this time period—such as the Mormon westward movement, Indian relations, and the Utah War.

Brigham Young and Thomas L. Kane wrote at least one letter every year except for the years 1862, 1863, and 1865. The highest volume of letters was written during 1857 and 1858, the years of the Utah War. This high volume provides detailed accounts of the perplexing struggles that President Young and the Saints faced during that time, as well as the trust Young placed in Kane to act as a mediator between the Church and the federal government.

*The Prophet and the Reformer* is a valuable compilation of correspondence coming out of the nineteenth-century West. This book provides a unique understanding of the lives, characteristics, and friendship of two prominent men, as well as the life and times in which they lived. The world of Latter-day Saint documentary history is enhanced by this work, as *The Prophet and the Reformer* is the first publication to bring all the extant Young and Kane correspondence together in one place.

—Alexsandra Foster