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Much of today's visual experience is vicarious—mediated through films, television, videos, and reproduced photographs in printed materials. Visual images reproduced in media as a source of information are both entertaining and enlightening, often providing multiple layers of information—particularly when coupled with text material such as a caption. The viewer's experience of the image may be informed as much by the caption as by the details within the image itself. Roland Barthes, a cultural historian, argues that the text may simply amplify a set of connotations already given in the visual image or it may produce an entirely new significance that is retroactively projected into the image, so much so as to appear denoted there.¹

Thus, a portrait of a woman and a small baby painted in the primitive style looks simple and unimportant in Images of Faith until one reads the caption: "Phoebe Carter Woodruff and Son Joseph . . . the portrait held special significance for the Woodruffs. To them young Joseph was a 'covenant' child because he was their first child born after they were sealed in the Nauvoo Temple. Less
than a year later, little Joseph died at Winter Quarters” (8). Suddenly, the visual image becomes an artifact charged with both historical and emotional significance. Consequently, the portrait has value not only for its artistic merits, but also for the viewer’s associations with the thing it pictures. Nothing could be more true than Barthes’s observations for the visual images presented in these three outstanding books, which express very different points of view.

I

Utilizing hundreds of historic photographs, William W. Slaughter’s *Life in Zion* is a successful attempt to create a “family photographic album” for the institutional Church. Format and content lead the viewer on a visual tour of the Mormon past, covering the period of 1820 to 1995. Slaughter’s choice of images, coupled with the captions, give us a point of view that represents an intimate look at the Latter-day Saints. One spends time with some old familiar friends as well as some new ones.

It is virtually impossible to reproduce a significant collection of Latter-day Saint images from the nineteenth century that has not been previously published, given the relatively small collection of photographs of Church leaders and historic sites from this period. Images of Joseph and Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, Alexander Doniphan, Palmyra, Kirtland, Nauvoo, and Salt Lake City found in the pages of this work are well known to many Latter-day Saints. Yet Slaughter unearths some remarkable images that previously had not seen the light of day in the twentieth century. The 1856 image of Fort Bridger (28) is fascinating—a remarkable find.

Additionally, two images placed on the same page apparently taken during the same year (1860) are most interesting. The first photograph is of nineteen-year-old Joseph C. Rich as he began his first mission, and the second photograph is of sixteen-year-old Ann Eliza Hunter. The caption brings the two images together, informing the reader that the two young people married nine years later (42). One would expect such discoveries from the photographic archivist for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for he has spent years helping patrons identify photographs in the Church collection. There are many more hidden treasures in this book, making it an important contribution to Latter-day Saint visual history.
Life in Zion is divided into five chapters covering specific periods of Church history. The first basically covers the Joseph Smith period, ending when the Saints made their departure from Nauvoo in 1846; the second reflects Brigham Young’s administration; the third covers the administrations of John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow; and the fourth treats the administrations of Joseph F. Smith and Heber J. Grant. The remaining Church Presidents’ terms of service are included in the final chapter.

Unlike the earlier periods in Church history, the time periods covered in the last three chapters have much larger collection of Latter-day Saint–related photographic images (particularly those of individuals and families and those from settlements and growth areas beyond Salt Lake City). Some of the classic views are present, like the sacrament service in the Ephraim Tabernacle about 1900 (104), but many images appear in print here for the first time.

In particular, the last chapter is a who's who of employees in the Historical Department of the Church where Slaughter works. Readers who have done research in the Church archives may recognize these people, but for those who do not, the images are still important because they represent the growth of the modern Church.

Additionally, because this section includes many images that are taken by nonprofessional photographers, it looks more like a personal photo album than do the earlier chapters and gives the reader a familiar, yet original, view of the Latter-day Saint experience. Photographs of “regular people” from around the worldwide Church—like the view of the missionaries in the California San Jose Mission in October 1983 (177)—lend personality and a sense of intimacy to the work.

In an effort to present historic photographs in an interesting manner, Slaughter gives us an image and then some contemporaneous source (diary, letter, or autobiography) that brings the image to life, thereby layering the information from text and image. Among the small group of photographic historians interested in the Latter-day Saints, such sharing of photographic images and design elements has yielded wonderful fruits, and this is one of the best to date. When he cannot provide such a gem as a contemporaneous source document, Slaughter gives us some basic information about the individual(s) or place shown.
Missionaries in the California San Jose Mission, October 1983. Left to right: Elders Steven H. Moore, Randy Barney, Brian A. Coleman, Scott R. Christensen, Yotin Tanomart. Representative of several informal shots in Life in Zion. Courtesy Scott Christensen.

Deseret Book is to be congratulated on the fine quality of this publication: they provided the author with quality paper to showcase these important documents of the past. Some of the images are crystal clear, perhaps because Slaughter, due to his employment, was able to assure quality control on the reproduction of some of these images by eliminating one step in the reproduction process when he provided original photographs to the publisher. Other photographs, however, are not sized carefully or are second-generation images and thus on occasion appear blurred or out of focus.

Slaughter's work is a model of the documentation that is required when an author uses any type of sources (holographic or published secondary sources), including photographs. The LDS historical community could learn from his work. Unless historians begin to take photographic documents as seriously they do written ones, Latter-day Saint historical activities associated with visual documents will fall below the professional standards being set in the larger historical community.
Slaughter provides an important window to the past. His professional expertise and knack of identifying interesting photographs is no better evidenced than in this exceptional effort. It represents another important step in utilizing historic photographs in a responsible way. There are so many wonderful images in this book that provide “an intimate look at the Latter-day Saints” that *Life in Zion* should become an important resource for historians—a visual library.3

II

*The Mission* is also a photographic work recently released but this time by a large national publisher who hopes that sales will go beyond the Mormon market. According to promotional material by the publisher, it is “an extraordinary look by a team of international photojournalists at the customs, culture and spirit of the people of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”4 It reminds one of the popular photographic series *A Day in the Life*, in which professional photojournalists spread out across a country, state, or city and in a twenty-four-hour period photographed everything from a hospital delivery room early in the morning to a mechanic working on a truck in a garage late at night. In the case of *The Mission*, the photojournalists spent one year journeying to six continents to capture the Latter-day Saint story. Unlike *Life in Zion*, which utilizes historic photographs found in archives, this collection presents many “never-before-seen,” recent color photographs that do not require the daunting task of identifying photographer, location, and dates.

Joseph Walker, communications director at Geneva Steel Corporation and the editor of *Pioneer*, a magazine for the National Society of the Sons of Utah Pioneers, wrote the captions. Because Walker is a Latter-day Saint, the photographs, taken by photographers who are not LDS, are placed in the context of a believer’s understanding of what the images mean. This is not the first time a non-LDS photographic effort has been supplemented by the writing of practicing Latter-day Saints for an audience larger than the Church.5

This book is a perfect example of a publisher’s efforts to use layers of information to lead the viewer to specific conclusions—in
this case, respect for the personal lives of the members of the Church and for the institutional Church itself. Text and photographs are often tied together, although some are tied only by association with their placement in a section.

Some of the images included in *The Mission* are absolutely moving to me. The two photographs of Emmitt Young, a Black convert from Los Angeles, are among the most dramatic of the book (66–67). For long-time members of the Church in the United States, the book vividly reminds them that the Church has truly become international and multicultural. Particularly touching are the images of Black Saints in the Dominican Republic (34), a Filipino branch president in the streets of Manila (26), a Native American convert in her scrub-oak lean-to (24), a Samoan schoolteacher in his lavalava (49), a Chinese missionary serving in the United States (102), a young Kenyan convert being confirmed (117), and two young Peruvian children climbing a hill (125).

The organization of the book presents a rather insightful look at modern Latter-day Saint culture. *The Mission* reveals the contours of Latter-day Saint life in a visual way that few other books have done. Three basic divisions—“Families Are Forever,” “A New Church for a New Land,” and “Spreading the Word”—are each divided into smaller sections that also feature several essays providing depth to the subject. Unlike the single photographic images provided in many books, the theme of each section is enhanced by related images of the same people.

Certainly, the life story of nine million Latter-day Saints living in thousands of communities cannot be adequately portrayed in a book of 226 pages, yet there is something pleasing with this work that reveals the heart of Latter-day Saint life by detailing such events as death, marriage, baptism, teaching, recreation, public and private worship, and, most importantly, service to family, community, country, and world. Again, as in most publications, little errors find their way into this lavishly illustrated publication. For example, Wilford Woodruff's name is once misspelled (5).

An added bonus in this oversized book is two essays written by two observers of the Latter-day Saint community, one an insider and the other an outsider. President Gordon B. Hinckley’s introduction is personable and provides a non-Latter-day Saint audience
Review of three books on LDS Images

a view of the Church’s beliefs. Roger Rosenblatt’s tribute to his Mormon high-school English teacher in New York is a fitting addition to a book that leaves empty spaces between the photographs, allowing personal reflections of those who open the book to communicate something that no text can tell.

Finally, *Images of Faith* is a team effort by the staff at the Museum of Church History and Art in Salt Lake City. Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, senior curators at the museum, are primarily responsible for selecting the artworks and preparing the essays that highlight the Latter-day Saint art tradition. Museum Director Glen M. Leonard served as general editor of the project and wrote a brief introduction.

Deseret Book deserves recognition again for the quality of this publication. The oversized book allows the visual images to assume a more natural appearance. The paper quality enhances the items selected for inclusion in this publication.

The book is divided into five chapters covering different periods of artistic expression among the Latter-day Saints. Ending the book with a chapter on twentieth-century international folk art was a strong, natural move—visually and textually demonstrating that the Saints throughout the world enrich the cultural and spiritual aspects of the Church. With the publication of this work, many people can become familiar with these rich museum treasures and with the people whose talents make life a little more interesting in Zion.

Of course, the book highlights only a portion of Latter-day Saint art and of those individuals who have contributed to our artistic heritage. Talented individuals like nineteenth-century daguerreotypist Marsena Cannon and twentieth-century artist Walter Rane are not represented. Hopefully, many more volumes detailing other deserving artists will appear in the future.

The visual story of the Church and its people is too large, too important, and too pervasive to be treated adequately from any single point of view. Yet, through these artists’ creative vision and interpretation of their experience, the reader can catch the spirit of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latter-day Saint life, history,
and culture. Those willing to steal a few minutes or a few hours from their busy schedules will be richly rewarded as they ponder over these treasures of the past and present so beautifully presented in *Images of Faith*.

**NOTES**


3In fact, the book has already been used as a resource for at least one publication. I identified a number of images and written sources from Slaughter’s work for my recent book, *Their Faces toward Zion: Voices and Images of the Trek West* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996).

4Dust jacket flyleaf.


Reviewed by Davis Bitton, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Utah.

One does not have to read E. H. Gombrich on art and illusion\(^1\) to realize that any picture is inevitably a choice: the photographer or painter chooses what goes within the frame and, beyond that, chooses what to highlight—the expression on human faces, even the time of day, light and darkness. And the artist also chooses from a range of stylistic possibilities, including a kind of photographic realism, impressionism, expressionism, various symbolic and fantasy combinations, and of course different degrees of abstraction. When visual works are compiled into a book or an exhibit, drawing from a large pool of potential candidates, again there is selection.

I

Why William W. Slaughter chose the particular photographs in his *Life in Zion* is not always clear. A certain number of these photographs appear in print for the first time, while others are already familiar. But almost all of the pictures deserve more than a quick look. Not only do these historical photographs show how certain individuals appeared at different dates, but also by applying intensive examination known as photoanalysis, we can discover valuable information and ask many questions. One can imagine an enjoyable hour as two or more people examine picture after picture, saying, “Look at this . . . and this.” Why is one woman holding a basket over her head and another an umbrella at Plymouth, England, in 1863? (45). Do the linked arms and hands on shoulders in the famous group portrait of “The Big Ten,” some of Brigham Young’s
daughters, indicate genuine affection and solidarity between these prominent young women? (47). If so, does the same stance depict unity between the males of American Fork’s brass band? (49).

The photograph showing the funeral cortège of Wilford Woodruff in 1898 reveals telephone poles in the middle of South Temple Street, still a dirt road, and a trolley car but of course not a single automobile (97). A wonderful photograph of a wagon train at Hams Fork in 1900 reminds us that pioneering continued long after 1847 and even long after the coming of the railroad in 1869 (102).

Pictures of individuals and groups abound: missionaries and their wives in Japan (106); Ella Wheeler Wilcox meeting with Mormon women (109); a group at Old Folks Day in American Fork, with Ebenezer Beesley holding his violin (110); missionary Spencer W. Kimball bathing his tired feet (126); Church leaders and their families bathing in the Great Salt Lake (129); President Heber J. Grant at the 1922 inauguration of radio station KZN (130); missionary Gordon B. Hinckley in the British Mission (142). And on and on. One of the last pictures shows a group of Primary children in Sierra Leone, West Africa. This is a photo album not just for a family, but for the entire Church.

One thing I look for in such a book is documentation of the individual works. Who was the photographer? Which repository has the picture? The regrettable editorial decision of placing this information in small type at the back of the book means that the photographer will get no credit in the eyes of most readers.

My other regret may have as much to do with the original photography as with the reproduction in the present work. Several of the photographs seem too hazy or too small for adequately seeing what is there. Serious readers may wish to have a good magnifying glass on hand. In any case, they will be well rewarded.

II

With The Mission, the question of documentation does not arise. The forty-one photographers are identified at the back of the book, and captions give proper credit for the individual photographs. If this is history in the sense that the events photographed are past, it is contemporary history, for the photographs are so recent as to be thought of as the present. From Slaughter’s survey,
more than half of which focuses on the nineteenth century, we shift to the 1990s.

And so we see a baptism in Alaska (8-11), sixteen-year-old Brittany Fairclough receiving a father’s blessing (16), and Mejkin Legler writing in her journal (17). A magnifying glass enables us to read Mejkin’s reminder in the frame of her mirror: “Don’t give up what you want most for what you want now.” We see dancing in Perth, Australia (20-21); Native American Mormons on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation (24-25); a pedicab driver in the Philippines (26); the rodeo club at Ricks College (50-51); ballroom dancing at BYU (55). Samoa, Flat Island, Ireland (the “Stormin’ Mormon” middleweight boxer, Ray Close [32-33]), the Dominican Republic—the geographical jumps are wide and unpredictable, but somehow all of the images reflect a common faith.

Death is not left out. We look in on the funeral of a young father in Utah (64–65) and the death of a young black convert, determined to spend his final months as a missionary (66–67). Family history research and records, general conference, pageants at Cumorah and Castle Valley, workers on welfare projects—the reader is treated to Church members engaged in quite a number of activities.

The importance of ordinances in the lives of Latter-day Saints is shown by touching pictures of baptism, blessing of children, and the sacrament. Temples are captured from the outside, showing the excitement of weddings. An unforgettable picture shows a line of Filipino youths dressed in white, waiting patiently to perform baptisms for the dead (118).

Humanitarian activities are represented by pictures showing Relief Society service, welfare projects, doctors performing surgery in China (166–67), an English Relief Society president and her overland van journey to take supplies to Croatia (168–73), and the prison ministry of Bishop Heber Geurts (152–55).

Missionaries are shown preparing at the Missionary Training Center, saying good-bye, then laboring in Russia, Thailand, the Philippines, Poland, Belize, Australia, Hong Kong, the Dominican Republic, Japan—and the Bronx.

These pictures are all positive. I like that. We have enough of the other. The purpose here is to catch the spirit of the religion: its goodness, its multifacetedness, its international character.
It is not, I think, a criticism to recognize that the diversity and complexity of Mormon life are so great that they simply cannot be captured photographically in a single work. And it is fair to recognize that many world settings are not represented in this book. France, Chile, Malta, Polynesia, Haiti, Fiji, Siberia, Zaire, Papua New Guinea. These and many other places where members live and missionaries labor are not represented. But *The Mission* does convey the important fact that Mormonism is not limited to the white Anglo-Saxon visage of Utah. I wish we could see young missionaries coming out of their training in India or Brazil. And the missionaries shown in their fields of labor, practically all Americans it seems, should have been supplemented by a few showing young Filipinos, Mexicans, Indonesians, or Nigerians laboring together. We do see blond Elder Albert Kemp of Kansas City, Missouri, and his Black companion Elder Prince Henry Omondi as they preach the gospel in Kenya (208–9). One book simply cannot do it all.

Especially interesting is the epilogue, “Images of Faith” by Roger Rosenblatt (215–17), well known as a contributing editor of *Time* magazine and frequent commentator on public television. Rosenblatt does not discuss the individual pictures but is marvelously insightful and willing to recognize good in Mormons. How refreshing! It seems that a key player in influencing Rosenblatt was a high-school English teacher by the name of Jon Beck Shank, a Mormon and a poet. Rosenblatt tells how he, obviously a precocious and educable young man, drank in the words of Shank, a gifted and inspiring teacher.

This I can well believe, for I knew Shank. In fact, Jon and I were friends at Brigham Young University during the school year 1949–50 and collaborated on a prize-winning varsity show; he wrote the script and the lyrics, while I composed the music. I later lost track of him. It is satisfying to learn that his New York City students knew he was a Latter-day Saint. Of course, if they studied his marvelous little book *Poems*, published by Knopf in 1945, they could not fail to notice references to the Book of Mormon. At least one young student in Shank’s classroom, Rosenblatt, was so touched that many years later he can tell us that “what matters most in these images are the things unseen; and what is most real is the life that is guessed at” (217).
Joseph C. Rich, 1860. An example of one of the photographs that had not been previously published. Courtesy LDS Church Archives.
And no one, I think, will fail to be moved by President Gordon B. Hinckley’s introduction, entitled “Why Am I a Member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?” (1–4). Explaining that his faith is much more than a matter of inheritance, he goes on to give nine carefully selected articles on his personal faith, all beginning with “I believe.” This is a beautiful, open-ended statement to the world.

The Mission—with Rosenblatt’s essay; the superior photography, often showing unusual angles; and Walker’s captions—is a poignant and delightful showing of the Church in the lives of the people today.

Before I leave photographs, it would be a shame not to recall Something Extraordinary: Celebrating Our Relief Society Sisterhood (Deseret Book, 1992), which might well be regarded as an earlier companion volume to The Mission. Also showing the contemporary Church, it captures the great variety of women’s activities throughout the world. Its photographs, identified in microscopic print by country and photographer, cry out for adequate captions. Even so, it is a delight.

III

Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-Day Saints is a team project of the staff of the Museum of Church History and Art. The preliminary selection from the Museum’s collection was made by Richard G. Oman and Robert O. Davis, who also prepared the text, but a dozen or so other staff members and docents assisted in the selection. In a preliminary statement, Museum director Glen M. Leonard is careful to acknowledge that “many important Latter-day Saint artists are not represented” in the Museum’s collection (xi). Likewise, many artists whose works are in the Museum’s holdings could not be included because of space limitations. Again, selection is basic to what we see on the page as representative of Church art.

Nonphotographic art and crafts are the focus: furniture, ceramics, quilts, wood carvings, sculpture, and especially painting. As in Mormon history and Mormon literature, one has to decide whether it is the Mormon producer or the Mormon subject that determines inclusion. It is not entirely clear to me why LeConte
Stewart’s painting *Private Car* (1937), for example, is Mormon art. Would a history of the Crusades by a Mormon historian be Mormon history? Still, a generous definition is probably preferable to a narrow one, and we can enjoy the works here compiled.

The photographic reproduction is superior. The textual accompaniment is precise and professional: title, artist, medium, size of the work, and location are all given. Knowing the attraction of pictures and the aversion of many people to reading the printed word, I am not sanguine that the text by Oman and Davis will be properly appreciated. But their comments and insights deserve praise.

The use of painting and sculpture in the Mormon artistic tradition began surprisingly early. Both individual and group portraits are numerous, some few of them originating during the Nauvoo period. During the second half of the century, romantic landscapes were being produced by George Beard, H. L. A. Culmer, John Tullidge, and Reuben Kirkham. The marvelous C. C. A. Christensen painted many historical scenes, and Danquart A. Weggeland did portraits and genre scenes. George M. Ottinger, an underappreciated Renaissance man of the territorial period, depicted Chimney Rock at sunrise and the arrival of the Mormon Battalion at Carrizo Creek. With all of the arduous toil required to settle a wilderness, it seems some Mormons found space in their lives for the appreciation of artistic beauty.

Robert O. Davis gives us a lovely chapter on “The Impact of French Training on Latter-day Saint Art, 1890-1925.” The label is too simple for this fertile thirty-five year period, but the influence of study in France was doubtless strong on Edwin Evans, James T. Harwood, J. Leo Fairbanks, Herman H. Haag, John Hafen, and others. Gifted sculptors Cyrus E. Dallin and Mahonri M. Young, not forgetting their Utah roots, created memorable works, such as the eloquent panel “Deliverance” on the Seagull Monument by Young.

“Developing a Regional Latter-day Saint Art, 1925–1965” becomes the theme of the next chapter, with such artists as Minerva K. Teichert, Edward Grigware, LeConte Stewart, and the prolific sculptor Avard T. Fairbanks. Maynard Dixon’s vivid *The Hand of God*, a good selection from LeConte Stewart, four of Arnold Friberg’s narrative images, Richard Burde’s emotionally gripping *Return of the Prodigal Son*, and Mabel Frazer’s strongly conceived...
*The Furrow* are all here to enjoy, not to mention many individual portraits. I mention these only to give some idea of the richness of *Images of Faith*.

Most exciting in many ways is the section entitled “Contemporary Latter-day Saint Art, 1965–1995.” Many of these works evoke strong emotions in me, and I am sure they will in many others. The gospel is for every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and talented artists are found in many places and cultures. Consider Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life as conveyed by Juan Escobedo, Robert Yellowhair, Victor de la Torre (wood carving), Harrison Begay Jr. (blackware pottery), and Tammy Garcia (fired clay).

Henri-Robert Bresil’s *Baptizing in the Waters of Mormon* and Ljiljana Crnogaj Fulepp’s *Early Morning Baptism near Belgrade* capture something that evades even the skilled photographers of *The Mission*. And for simple depth and reverence it will be hard to surpass Thomas Polacca’s *The Faithful History of Tom Polacca*, a ceramic. A photograph, however excellent, is of course inadequate for the full appreciation of such a three-dimensional work. It may be useful to remind ourselves that photographs of paintings are also inadequate, offering a diminished experience. Diminished, but still quite good. One hopes that more than a few who come across this book will “hie” to the Church museum “in the twinkling of an eye.”

It would be both undiscriminating and unconvincing to maintain that all Mormon art is meritorious. But it is more vital and diverse than most people realize. This book does what a book can—instructs and shows much of the best of the artistic production within the Mormon community.

All three of these books are selective, but, come to think of it, so is life as we individually experience and remember it.

NOTE