

THE MISSIONARY WORK OF
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Dallin H. Oaks
Lance B. Wickman

Reprinted from
John Witte, Jr. and Richard C. Martin, eds.
Sharing the Book:
Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Mission
(Maryknoll, N : Orbis Books, 1999)

THE MISSIONARY WORK OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Dallin H. Oaks
Lance B. Wickman

We are pleased to be included in this global study of evangelism, proselytism, and human rights. We write as leaders and participants in the missionary work¹ of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.² We seek to provide an inside perspective of an effort that includes approximately sixty thousand full-time missionaries in more than 125 nations and territories. Hopefully, the experience gained in that missionary effort will complement the other chapters in this important volume.

As we portray the missionary experience and philosophy of the people who are called Mormons or Latter-day Saints (LDS), we must explain the why and the how of their missionary work. This will necessarily include a description of doctrinal foundations, historical experience, and current missionary practices. We hope this will help explain why The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter “the church”) deems it vital for religious liberty norms to protect and facilitate appropriate missionary work.

The driving force behind the missionary work of Christians is the spiritual duty to witness of Jesus Christ and his gospel. There are counterweights to that duty, but they are different in different religious traditions. In some there is a sense that the toleration for others mandated by the Golden Rule requires restraint in missionary efforts. In contrast, Mormons have such appreciation for the gospel message and the Great Commission to take it to all the world that the Golden Rule is not an obligation to refrain from witnessing to sincere adherents to other faiths but the central motivation of the duty to share.

The primary restraint on a Mormon's duty to witness is his or her profound respect for moral agency—the right of every soul to choose what he or she will believe and practice. A second restraint is the law, whose observance is a fundamental tenet of a Mormon's faith. Hence, missionary work is restrained by legal requirements or prohibitions. Over the years, this has given LDS missionaries and their leaders extensive experience with various tensions between legal regulation and spiritual witness.

The fundamental LDS attitude toward those of other faiths is respect and love and a desire to share with them a most precious possession. Latter-day Saints³ do not seek to pull others away from the truth they have but to add to their knowledge, their happiness, and their peace. The church proclaims that it is neither Orthodox, Catholic, nor Protestant, but the *restored* church of Jesus Christ, bearing a message that was first given to God's spirit children in a pre-earth existence, which explains the purposes of mortal life, and which reveals important truths about the eternities to come. So far as they can do so without violating the law or infringing the moral agency of individuals, Latter-day Saints feel conscientiously impelled to share their gospel message with everyone in the world.

THE DOCTRINAL FOUNDATION

THE COMMAND TO WITNESS

As he neared the end of his earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded his disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Mt 28:19). The Gospel of Mark reports this as a command to go "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," and promises that "[h]e that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk 16:15-16). During one of his appearances to his apostles following his resurrection, Jesus reaffirmed that they should be "witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

To Latter-day Saints, this Great Commission is obligatory on all Christians. It imposes a sacred duty to witness "among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 112:1),⁴ for, as the apostle Peter declared, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

What was the gospel they were to preach? When Peter and the other apostles were arrested and brought before the authorities because they had violated the direction not to teach in the name of Jesus, they answered that they "ought to obey God rather than men." They explained God's command:

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we

are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him (Acts 5:29-32).

For Latter-day Saints, the command to be witnesses of Jesus Christ and to preach his gospel has been renewed in other works of scripture. The restored church of Jesus Christ began with the calling of a prophet, Joseph Smith,⁵ whose first work was to translate an ancient book of prophecies and teachings given to Israelite refugees who had fled to the Americas. A purpose of this Book of Mormon,⁶ as stated on its title page, was “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.” One of its teachings is that those who are desirous to come into the fold of God have the duty “to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death” (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 18:9).

Like the Bible (especially the New Testament), the Book of Mormon contains the witness and doctrine of Jesus Christ that is to be preached. Speaking to an audience in the New World, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, the Risen Lord declared:

Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. . . .

Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do (Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi 27:13-14, 20-21).

In still another book of modern revelation, the Lord declared to early elders in the restored church: “Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Doctrine and Covenants 68:8).

In their attempts to fulfill this God-given responsibility, Latter-day Saints do not preach and teach merely to bring people into the church. They do not preach and teach merely to persuade people to live better lives. These are important, but the restored church offers something more.

The purpose of witnessing and missionary work by representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to offer all of the children of God the opportunity to learn the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored in these latter days and to give all the children of God the privilege of receiving the ordinances of salvation. By this means the door is opened for all the living and the dead to receive “eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (Doctrine and Covenants 14:7).

For Latter-day Saints, who believe that God has restored vital additional knowledge and power to bless the lives of all his children and who believe that they have a duty to share these treasures with all humankind, the command to witness is fundamental to all their belief and practice. It is a vital part of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint. To all who hold these convictions, the duty to witness and to share is a fundamental matter of conscience.

As we shall see, this duty and conviction has characterized Latter-day Saints from the beginning. It dictated the behavior of the earliest leaders and converts. It directed missionaries to scores of nations. It invited their converts to immigrate to join and strengthen the body of the new church on the frontier of the United States. And it shaped the growth of a nation as the Mormon pioneers colonized a substantial portion of the western part of the United States.

As we shall also see, this duty to witness and this conviction of its God-given importance are still vital to the self-image, faith, and practice of Latter-day Saints. They are people of faith and people of action. For them, lifelong participation in missionary work, including serving missions as young people and as retired couples, and striving to be worthy witnesses through precept and example throughout their lives, are the natural fruits of loving faith in action. Latter-day Saints believe and practice the word of the Lord given to early members of the church, “that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 15:6).

MORAL AGENCY

Of course, each Christian denomination has its own interpretations of the gospel of Jesus Christ and its own points of emphasis. For Latter-day Saints, a point of emphasis that is critical to the way they conduct their missionary work is the importance of moral agency.

Among the profound questions pondered by all thoughtful people are these: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going when I die? Left unanswered, these questions gnaw at the edges of consciousness because they are fundamental to the nature and purpose of life.

In all ages God has provided answers to life’s questions through his prophets. Central to the message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the proclamation that God has called prophets in our time, as God did

anciently, and that through these prophets God has revealed answers to these great questions to guide his children safely across the treacherous shoals of mortality.

Latter-day revelation teaches that all mankind dwelt with God the Eternal Father in the pre-mortal world as his spirit sons and daughters.⁷ Every man, woman, and child is, therefore, a literal child of God, who loves each one with the perfect love of a divine Father. In that pre-mortal realm we knew him and his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who was to be the Only Begotten in the flesh. Prior to the creation of the earth, God and all of his spirit offspring met in a Grand Council. The Father's plan pertaining to the Creation and divine purpose of the earth was presented by Jesus Christ:

And there stood one among them [the hosts of Heaven] that was like unto God, and he [Jesus Christ] said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

And they who keep their first [pre-mortal] estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second [mortal] estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever (Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3:24-26).

Earth was created as a proving ground for the spiritual children of God, to give them an opportunity to demonstrate by individual choice their faithfulness to God's commandments. Those who do so (that is, who "keep" their "second estate") will have "glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." Redemption for earthly sins and mistakes is made by Jesus Christ for those choosing to follow him. The rewards for righteous choices in mortality are eternal life and continual growth toward perfection in the presence of the Father and the Son.⁸

But this was not the only plan proposed in that heavenly council. Satan (or Lucifer, as he was then known) was also present, and he offered an alternative plan: "Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor" (Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4:1).

Satan offered to redeem all mankind—"that one soul shall not be lost." But there was an important qualification: In the redemption proposed by Satan, there would be no choice, no proving ground, and he insisted on receiving the Father's honor and glory as the perfidious price for his type of redemption. Earth as a proving ground, an avenue to eternal life for the sons and daughters of God, would be obviated. The privilege of individual choice or moral agency—central to Christ's plan—was eliminated from Satan's

Satan's plan was rejected, and he was cast out of heaven down to earth where he continues his opposition to the divine principle of moral agency.⁹

The existence of opposition is a corollary of moral agency. Opposition is necessary, for the children of God cannot grow without exercising their agency by choosing between alternatives. It was so from the foundation of creation, it was so in the Garden of Eden, and it is so today: Good stands in opposition to evil, and it is given to men and women to choose between them. According to Latter-day revelation, "the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself," which he could not do "save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other" (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:16). Thus, the Lord's great plan of happiness is grounded upon this exercise of moral agency in the face of opposition.

Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ redeemed the children of men from the effects of Adam's choice in the Garden, the so-called fall of Adam. Thus redeemed from the effects of Adam's "original sin," all men are assured of resurrection and immortality¹⁰ and are kept from ultimately returning to the presence of God only by their own sinful choices.¹¹ The Messiah's atonement for individual sin is conditioned upon individual repentance, meaning the exercise of moral agency in obedience to God's commandments. The Book of Mormon teaches that the righteous exercise of agency brings joy, which is the very purpose of man's existence.¹²

The underlying foundation is the grace and atonement of Jesus Christ,¹³ and the operative principle is moral agency—the right to choose in a world where there is opposition and where alternative choices are available, and then to be accountable for one's choices. This right of choice is the key to happiness, and it is essential to salvation. Every person has a God-given right to hear and a right to choose. Because of the central importance of these rights to the very purpose of life, no man or government is justified in interfering with them.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LDS MISSIONARY WORK

BEGINNINGS AND MESSAGE

Missionary work began during the translation of the Book of Mormon in 1829 and intensified after the church was formally organized in April 1830. Samuel H. Smith, a brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, traveled through towns in upstate New York to acquaint people with the newly published Book of Mormon. In the fall of 1830 four men were called to go on a mission to the western frontier. They preached in what is now New York, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas. In the next few years, missionaries were sent to other American states and to parts of Canada.

The primary message of these missionaries was millennialist Christianity, deeply rooted in the Bible but generously flavored with the novelty of the new

witness of the Book of Mormon, and strongly moved by the urgency inherent in the calling of a new prophet and the restoration of long-lost doctrines and authority.¹⁴

Within a decade missionary outreach had extended across the Atlantic. The calling of missionaries to England is representative of the boldness with which this missionary work was undertaken and the spirit of sacrifice with which it was carried out. This first overseas initiative came in June 1837, at a time when the still newly organized church consisted of only about fourteen thousand members struggling for economic survival on the frontiers of western America, in Ohio and Missouri. During a Sunday meeting, the Prophet Joseph Smith whispered to Heber C. Kimball, one of the twelve apostles, that the Spirit of the Lord had spoken that Heber should “go to England and proclaim my Gospel, and open the door of salvation to that nation.”¹⁵ Heber recorded his reaction:

O, Lord, I am a man of stammering tongue, and altogether unfit for such a work; how can I go to preach in that land, which is so famed throughout Christendom for learning, knowledge and piety; the nursery of religion; and to a people whose intelligence is proverbial!¹⁶

The idea of such a mission was almost more than Heber could bear, but his faith and obedience prevailed:

However, all these considerations did not deter me from the path of duty; the moment I understood the will of my Heavenly Father, I felt a determination to go at all hazards, believing that He would support me by His almighty power, and endow me with every qualification that I needed; and although my family was dear to me, and I should have to leave them almost destitute, I felt that the cause of truth, the Gospel of Christ, outweighed every other consideration.¹⁷

In less than two months Kimball and several associates were preaching to congregations in England. Eight months later hundreds of converts had joined the church and many branches had been organized.

METHODS/PROCEDURES

The organization and procedures for the pursuit of missionary work by the new Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were dictated by scripture and by early prophetic direction that continues to the present day. The missionaries were more than volunteers. They were called to service by a prophet, and the place and duration of their labors were given to them by that same authority. They did not go forth alone. They were commanded to go “two by two”

(Doctrine and Covenants 42:6). They were not compensated for their labors. Like the early disciples, they were even commanded to go without purse or scrip.¹⁸ As with the early disciples, that command was later relaxed,¹⁹ but LDS missionaries remain uncompensated.

The method of their preaching was consistent with Bible teachings, amplified and reaffirmed by modern revelation. The early apostles taught that Christians should “follow after the things which make for peace” (Rom 14:19). They should avoid contention, debate, strife, and wrath, and they should communicate with others in gentleness and meekness.²⁰ In revelations given specifically to the restored church by its prophet and applied faithfully by its missionaries, the Lord reaffirmed these directions: “And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:41). There should be no contention. The gospel was not to be preached “in wrath nor with strife” (60:14). In publishing their glad tidings, the elders should “do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers” (19:30).

The Prophet Joseph Smith gave instructions that imposed limits on missionaries’ teaching children without the consent of the head of the household, an apparent effort to preserve family harmony and honor the government of the home.

And first, it becomes an Elder . . . instead of commencing with children, or those who look up to parents or guardians to influence their minds, thereby drawing them from their duties, which they rightfully owe these legal guardians, they should commence their labors with parents, or guardians; and their teachings should be such as are calculated to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to the fathers; and no influence should be used with children, contrary to the consent of their parents or guardians. . . . [T]herefore, first teach the parents, and then, with their consent, persuade the children to embrace the Gospel also.²¹

In its content the message of the Mormon missionaries was confident but not confrontational, firm but not negative. Its essence is expressed in parts of two sermons by Brigham Young, one of the church’s earliest and most successful missionaries, later the second president of the church.

When I first came into the Church it was a subject of considerable thought to me why people whom I knew to be as good and moral as they could be, should have to repent. But I could see afterwards that if they had nothing else to repent of they could and ought to repent of their false religions, of their narrow, contracted creeds in which they were bound, of the ordinances of men, and get something better. . . . “Well,” say the ministers, “we have lived according to the light we have received.” We say, are you willing to receive more? If so, here is more for you. So far as

your faith in Christ goes, and your morality, we say, Amen. But here is something more.²²

If this is the work of God, let us understand its beauty and glory. I do not say that all are like myself; but from the day I commenced preaching the gospel to this present moment, I never had a feeling in my heart to occupy much time in preaching hell to the people, or in telling them much about being damned. There are the kingdoms and worlds which God has prepared, and which are waiting for the just. There are more beauty, glory, excellency, knowledge, power, and heavenly things than I have time to talk about, without spending my time in talking about the hells prepared for the damned. I have not time to talk much about them.²³

PERSISTENCE

Despite the severe persecution and extreme poverty of the leaders and members of the church in its first twenty-five years (including the murder of Joseph Smith, the expulsion of Mormons from the states of Missouri and Illinois, and the epic migration of Mormon pioneers across the great plains of America from 1846 through 1869), the early Mormons continued to carry out their commission to send missionaries to every nation.

In late 1839 seven of the twelve apostles left to fulfill their call to the British Isles. Two more apostles joined them there. They preached as missionaries in England for over a year.²⁴ These missionaries departed on their assignments in that stressful period when the Mormons, driven out of Missouri, were just beginning to settle in a swampy, sickly area along the Mississippi River in western Illinois. Some of these men were sick when they departed; all of them left families in stressful circumstances. The nobility of the Mormon wives who supported their husbands in this undertaking is no less than their husbands'. A recent history gives this description:

Many members of the Twelve were struck with the ague as they prepared to depart for England. Wilford Woodruff, who was very ill, left his wife, Phoebe, almost without food and the necessities of life. George A. Smith, the youngest Apostle, was so sick that he had to be carried to the wagon, and a man who saw him asked the driver if they had been robbing the graveyard. Only Parley P. Pratt, who took his wife and children with him, his brother Orson Pratt, and John Taylor were free from disease as they left Nauvoo, although Elder Taylor later became terribly ill and almost died as they traveled to New York City.

Brigham Young was so ill that he was unable to walk even a short distance without assistance, and his companion, Heber C. Kimball, was

no better. Their wives and families, too, lay suffering. When the Apostles reached the crest of a hill a short distance from their homes, both lying in a wagon, they felt as though they could not endure leaving their families in so pitiful a condition. At Heber's suggestion, they struggled to their feet, waved their hats over their heads, and shouted three times, "Hurrah, Hurrah, for Israel." Their wives, Mary Ann and Vilate, gained strength enough to stand and, leaning against the door frame, they cried out, "Good-bye, God bless you." The two men returned to their wagon beds with a spirit of joy and satisfaction at seeing their wives standing instead of lying sick in bed.²⁵

Their preaching was notably successful. After one year, in the spring of 1841, there were 5,864 members in the British Isles, with a steady stream of new members flowing across the Atlantic to gather with the Saints in Illinois and strengthen the new church.²⁶ This flow of emigrants from Europe (first from England and later from Scandinavia and the continent) to gather with the Saints in what they called Zion would continue for almost a century.

In the midst of all of the adversities suffered by the Mormon people and the difficulties of transportation and communication in the mid-nineteenth century, the missionaries of this restored faith were comforted and strengthened by the promise God had given them:

And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them (Doctrine and Covenants 1:4-5).

One of the greatest examples of the seriousness with which the early Mormons took their missionary responsibilities is their continuing to send missionaries even during the demands and disruptions of their western migration. Only two years after the initial band of pioneers arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake, at a time when the pioneers' grip on survival in that hostile area was still tenuous and when most Mormons were still on the trail westward or struggling to get resources to make the trip, the church sent out a new wave of missionaries. At the general conference in the city of the Great Salt Lake on October 6, 1849, the church called missionaries to go to Scandinavia, France, Germany, Italy, and the South Pacific.²⁷ Similarly, at a special conference in August 1852, ninety-eight men were assigned to missions. One of the church leaders remarked: "The missions we will call for during this conference, are generally, not to be very long ones; probably from 3 to 7 years will be as long as any man will be absent from his family."²⁸

The group of missionaries who were called from the pioneer settlements in that first decade preached the gospel in various countries of Europe, in South America, South Africa, China, India, Australia, Hawaii, New Zealand, and other islands in the South Pacific. As these missionaries rode or walked eastward along

the pioneer trail, they passed other Saints headed for the gathering place in the Rocky Mountains.

MISSIONARY IMPACT ON LDS GROWTH AND PERSONAL GOALS

The missionary work of the first half-century of the church (1830-80) gave a mighty impetus to the ranks of its members. It also provided an indelible impression on the thinking and commitment of its members. It does not overstate the point to say that missionary zeal, including potential, preparation, and performance, is fundamental to the identity of Latter-day Saints. It sets them apart.

Since its organization in 1830 the membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has increased at a rate a non-LDS sociologist, Rodney Stark, has described as “the Mormon ‘miracle’ of rapid growth.”²⁹ From six members in April 1830, the church grew to 16,865 at the conclusion of 1840. At the end of 1850, after a decade of persecution and forced exodus to the West, the total was 51,839. Membership totals at the end of the succeeding decades through 1900 were 61,082; 90,130; 133,628; 188,263; and 283,765. A half-century later, at the end of 1950, the total membership was 1,111,314. By the end of 1990 it was 7,761,179.³⁰

Observers have noted that the church growth rate since 1860 has never been less than about 30 percent per decade. In some decades it has exceeded 40 percent, and since 1950 the growth rate has accelerated to more than 50 percent in each decade.³¹ In 1984, Stark’s “high estimate” of LDS total membership was 10.4 million in the year 2000 and 23.5 million in the year 2020.³² So far, the church is well ahead of these predictions, having noted its 10 millionth member early in 1997.

The enormous continuing impact of missionary work on the thinking, conscientious beliefs, and behavior of Latter-day Saints is attributable in important measure to two unusual LDS doctrines or practices involving individual and family histories.

First, obedient to one of the earliest revelations given through their prophet,³³ Latter-day Saints have been faithful history-writers and journal-keepers. As a result, the sacrifices and accomplishments of Mormon missionaries from the earliest days are well recorded and proudly disseminated within the families of their posterity.

Second, in furtherance of their unique belief in the eternal duration of family relations, Latter-day Saints have been avid genealogists, assembling the world’s greatest collection of family records and pioneering techniques for searching out and disseminating family connections and histories. As a result, Mormons are unusually conscious of their ancestry, including where and how their forebears came into the church.

All of this gives Latter-day Saints an unusual sensitivity and sophistication about the general effects of missionary work upon the growth and accomplishments of their church and an unusual appreciation of the effects of missionary

work upon them personally. Pride in missionary forebearers and appreciation for the missionary work that converted their own ancestors provide Latter-day Saints with a strong foundation for personal commitments and sacrifices to continue that missionary tradition.

THE NATURE OF MISSIONARY WORK IN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS TODAY

PROSELYTING: AN INVITATION

The Savior's gentle summons to "come and see" (Jn 1:39) provides the lodestar of formal missionary work in the church. What do you know about the Mormons? Would you like to know more? Known as the Golden Questions, these two questions give substance to the slogan first coined some four decades ago by church president David O. McKay: "Every member a missionary."

In their simplicity and widespread application, the Golden Questions give expression to a member's duty to "share the gospel" with everyone—neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers casually encountered in the commonplace affairs of life. Their tenor and openness reveal much about the Mormons' low-key approach to missionary work. In the Latter-day Saint lexicon, the word *proselyting* means missionary work, which is simply an invitation. Mormons eschew any tactic that smacks of coercion, high pressure salesmanship, argumentation, or economic incentive.

The Golden Questions offer every invitee an opportunity to exercise personal choice to "know more" or to decline the invitation with a graceful exit from the encounter. They are universally appealing. Neither intimidating nor confrontational, these questions softly beckon, "come and see."

The church's "come and see" philosophy is manifest in the conservatively dressed young men and women who make up the body of the church's full-time missionary force and who are a familiar presence in many communities across the earth. A later section will describe the missionary culture from which these young people come and the policies and practices that govern their missionary labors.

The church's "come and see" philosophy is also apparent in numerous "visitors' centers" at church points of interest, usually temples or historic sites. These visitors' centers, such as the world-famous Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, are often "mini-museums" of church history related to the site and virtually always have displays illustrating essential beliefs of the church. They are staffed by full-time missionaries, usually retired couples and sister missionaries serving from six to eighteen months, who provide guided tours and answer questions in a spirit of warmth and friendliness. Members in the vicinity of a visitors' center are encouraged to invite their nonmember friends and acquaintances to visit the center with them. Those who are interested are encouraged to

learn more about the church by inviting missionaries to their homes. But there is no pressure; the approach is always the same: "Come and see."

The church uses many opportunities to present itself and the gospel in an accurate and positive light through the public media. The renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir, whose weekly nondenominational worship services are the oldest continuous network radio program in the United States, may be the best known example. Other media efforts take the form of brief paid announcements on radio and television, such as the church's award-winning "Home Front" series, which highlights various aspects of positive family life. Whether directly or indirectly, such media efforts are intended to bring together the gospel and those who are seeking for answers to life's questions.

The mild summons to "come and see" that is the substance of formal missionary work and public relations also guides most of the other activities of the church. Some of these carry a direct outreach because they are made available to all. Examples include efforts to translate and disseminate modern scriptures and other church publications and the church's pioneering work in microfilming and preserving family history records—the largest such data base in the world—and in encouraging their use.

The church's activity program is broad spectrum, almost literally from cradle to grave. Children's activities are conducted by the Primary. Young Men and Young Women organizations sponsor a multifaceted program of social, educational, athletic, and spiritual activities for adolescent youth. Priesthood quorums provide religious instruction and social activities for men. Relief Society, the oldest women's organization in the United States, provides opportunities for compassionate service and personal enrichment for women. Associated Priesthood and Relief Society activities serve the special interests of single adults. In all of these, rank and file Latter-day Saints beckon their nonmember friends to come, see, and participate.

But it is the lives of church members themselves that are the most compelling manifestation of the "come and see" philosophy. Just as the Savior taught that "ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mt 7:16), so the "fruits" of the doctrines of the restored gospel are woven into the fabric of the lives of Latter-day Saint men and women, youth, and children. The Latter-day Saints are a gracious, family-oriented, Christian people. They gently urge all to "come and see."

Thus, for Latter-day Saints, proselyting is a diffuse notion that permeates every facet of the church. But in its essence it is simply an invitation to learn more. Full-time missionaries, with their conservative apparel and distinctive name tags, are merely the most visible aspect of this invitation.

PREPARATION FOR FULL-TIME MISSIONARY SERVICE

I hope they call me on a mission,
 When I have grown a foot or two.
 I hope by then I will be ready
 To teach and preach and work as missionaries do.³⁴

Such are the words of a song learned by every Latter-day Saint child in Primary, the organization for children ages three through eleven. It expresses the hope of every Mormon boy, and many Mormon girls, to have the opportunity of serving as a full-time missionary.

This children's song is but one manifestation of the "witnessing culture" in which Latter-day Saint children are raised. The church's hymnal³⁵ is filled with missionary-oriented hymns, some of them dating to the earliest days of the church and many others familiar to all Christians. No fewer than thirty-six hymns relate to missionary work. Some are directly related to those called to full-time service, such as "Go, Ye Messengers of Glory":

Go, Ye messengers of glory;
Run ye legates of the skies.
Go and tell the pleasing story
That a glorious angel flies,
Great and mighty,
Great and mighty,
With a message from the skies.³⁶

Others, such as "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," have more general application:

It may not be on the mountain height or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle front my Lord will have need of me.
But if, by a still, small voice he calls to paths that I do not
know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine:
I'll go where you want me to go.
I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain, or plain or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I'll be what you want me to be.³⁷

In every case, these inspiring hymns, sung from childhood, reinforce a spiritual call of conscience for every faithful Latter-day Saint. Their words inspire Mormons of all ages to carry the gospel message far and near: "Because I have been given much, I too must give." "Come, all ye sons of God, who have received the priesthood." "Called to serve him, heavenly King of glory." "The time is far spent, there is little remaining." "We are sowing, daily sowing, countless seeds of good and ill." These first lines are but a sampler from the rich treasury of missionary hymns loved by church members everywhere.

A mission is an experience that most LDS young men and their families prepare for, literally from the moment of birth. While young women are eligible for missionary service and are very effective as part of the missionary force if they choose to serve, missionary service is the special province of young

men as a priesthood obligation. It also provides full-time preparation for a life of part-time service in the church's lay priesthood.

In family settings, such as the weekly Family Home Evening, parents teach their sons of the great opportunity and duty that awaits them when they reach age nineteen. Fathers and mothers who have served as missionaries share treasured missionary experiences, emphasizing not only their love for the lands, peoples, and languages where they served, but also the rich spiritual experiences they received in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From the time they are old enough to receive an allowance or a gift of a few coins from relatives or friends, children are taught to pay 10 percent of their financial increase as tithing for the Lord and to set aside an additional amount toward the cost of their missions. Since missionaries are not compensated by the church, the cost of their service is borne by them, their families, and for those with insufficient means, by other church members in their local units. So that no willing young person will be denied the opportunity of serving a mission, a general missionary fund is maintained from member contributions for missionaries whose families or local units are too poor to sustain them.

Church organizations further the young people's preparation for missionary service. Besides singing missionary-oriented songs and hymns, Primary children are taught to prepare themselves to receive a missionary call from the prophet. Stories and experiences of great missionaries are shared. Present and former full-time missionaries are invited periodically to share their testimonies of missionary work.

Preparation for missionary service is a prime focus of the Aaronic (lesser) Priesthood, which is held by young men aged twelve and older. Sunday lessons extol the virtues of missionary service and teach practical skills necessary for such service. Through corollary youth activities, such as Boy Scouts in the United States and Canada, youth are taught self-reliance and the development of virtue and character that will make them exemplary missionaries, as well as exemplary citizens and church members all their lives.

Another resource for preparing future missionaries is the LDS "seminary," which provides scriptural and theological instruction for young men and women of high school age. It is available in some locations during the school day as "released time" from secular education, but for most Mormon youth the world over it is an early morning program conducted daily before school. Seminary students arise early in order to attend their seminary class of approximately forty-five minutes and then hurry to their high schools for the normal school day. Seminary requires a significant measure of self-discipline by LDS students, who must also satisfy academic demands and often participate in extracurricular activities or part-time employment. A young man or woman who graduates from the four-year seminary program has developed a solid grounding in the scriptures and has received excellent preparation for missionary service.

Through all of this, young men and women are encouraged to maintain high moral standards that they may be worthy to accept a call to missionary service. This includes complete obedience to the law of chastity (abstinence from sexual

relations of any kind outside the bonds of marriage) and adherence to the “Word of Wisdom” (abstinence from tobacco, tea, coffee, alcohol, and drugs). Leaders of local congregations (usually bishops and their counselors) meet individually with every young man and woman twice a year in an interview to encourage them to maintain standards of righteousness and to assist them in meeting the challenges of adolescence. The bishop, who presides over the ward, understands that his first duty is to help these young people prepare for life, and in the case of young men, to help them prepare for missionary service.

When a young man nears his nineteenth birthday, the bishop interviews him as to his worthiness, helps him complete the necessary forms, and recommends him to the president of the church for a call as a missionary. Then begins an anxious period of waiting for the prospective missionary and his family. The arrival of the long-awaited letter of call for missionary service in an assigned geographical area is an event that, in many cases, the missionary has looked forward to literally all his life. Now he will lay aside education and other plans in order to serve the Lord.

Mature couples who have reached retirement and who are healthy and financially able are also encouraged to make themselves available for missionary service for periods ranging from six to eighteen months. Besides sharing the gospel with nonmembers, such couples often render valuable service in strengthening the church, especially where it is relatively new and the local leaders are still inexperienced. For them, the sacrifice is somewhat different from the young missionaries. Retired couples leave behind the comforts of home and the joy of association with their children and grandchildren. Yet they do so gladly because missionary service is such a part of being a Latter-day Saint. Many serve two or more missions.

A missionary call is an experience in which the entire congregation participates. On a Sunday before departure, a “missionary farewell” is held in the weekly sacrament service. The missionary and members of his or her family are invited to participate, praying and delivering brief sermons on appropriate gospel subjects. And when a missionary returns, he or she again speaks in the sacrament meeting, giving a report of service and sharing spiritual experiences. These farewells and homecomings do much to foster the missionary culture that pervades the church in every ward and branch.

Bidding goodbye to family and loved ones, who will not be seen again for two years, the newly called missionary reports to a Missionary Training Center (MTC). Here, he or she will receive instruction in the scriptures, a standard missionary lesson plan, and the rules of conduct expected of missionaries. Missionaries assigned to missions where they will speak their native tongue normally spend three weeks in the MTC. A missionary called to learn a new language spends nine weeks in the MTC, beginning the difficult task of mastering a new tongue—one that he will come to love as dearly as his own.

It is in the MTC that the new missionary joins his voice with dozens, even hundreds, of other missionaries in singing that spirited anthem of many Christians:

Called to serve Him, heavenly King of glory;
 Chosen e'er to witness for his name,
 Far and wide we tell the Father's story,
 Far and wide his love proclaim.

Onward, ever onward, as we glory in his name,
 Forward, pressing forward, as a triumph song we sing.
 God our strength will be; press forward ever
 Called to serve our King.³⁸

MISSIONARY WORK IN THE FIELD

Missionaries come from many lands and cultures. Some are assigned to serve in their own land; others serve far from home. An American may be assigned, as it were, in Peoria, Perth, or Paris; a Canadian in Montreal or Montevideo; a Russian in St. Petersburg (Russia) or St. Petersburg (Florida). The young men are all unmarried, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five, and are called to serve for a period of two years. Young women, also unmarried, are eligible to serve at age twenty-one and serve for eighteen months. All have received their call from the president of the church. All devote their full-time efforts to missionary service.

They are young, but as Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth" (1 Tm 4:12). Commenting on that verse to young men and women called as missionaries, Church President Gordon B. Hinckley has said:

What he [Paul] is saying is that if you reflect in your lives the elements of the gospel, people will look beyond your youth as in the faces of men and women who are believers in word, in their conversations, in their acts of love and charity, in spirit, their attitude, in faith, in purity.³⁹

Missionaries of the church serve in approximately 125 nations across the earth. In every land their standards of behavior are the same. They are expected to live according to a strict code of conduct. Among other things, missionaries are expected (1) to keep their thoughts, words, and actions in harmony with the message of the gospel; (2) to dress neatly, bathe frequently, polish shoes, and keep clothes clean, mended, and wrinkle-free; (3) never to be alone with anyone of the opposite sex or to participate in dating or flirtation; (4) to obey mission rules, civil regulations, visa requirements, and laws of the land where they serve; (5) never to become involved in political or commercial activities; and (6) to respect the customs and culture of those among whom they serve, including their religious beliefs, practices, and sacred sites.

Going forth two-by-two in their labors, Mormon missionaries reside in the midst of the people and become fluent in their language and knowledgeable of their culture. They grow to love the land and people where they serve, often to the point that their feelings run almost as deeply as for their native lands. These feelings are carried home at the conclusion of their missionary service.

Although functioning independently in their assigned pairs, missionaries are carefully supervised by the mission president, the presiding officer in the mission. A mission has specific geographic limits, and each missionary is assigned to a specific local area within it. Each is expected to remain with a missionary companion within that area at all times. Periodically, on the basis of inspiration, the mission president will transfer a missionary to a new locale and assign a new companion. Periodic transfers benefit the missionary and the work. The freedom to transfer missionaries throughout the mission is vital to mission operations.

The mission president is a mature church leader and man of experience and sound judgment. He is very carefully selected by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the twelve apostles. Usually he is already proficient in the predominant language of the mission. Accompanied by his family, he relocates to the area of his mission, where he normally presides for a period of three years.

From within his missionary force, the mission president calls other leaders to assist him in looking after the missionaries. These missionary leaders live and serve in the same locale as the missionaries they supervise. Their greatest influence is through their own exemplary service, but they also spend considerable time meeting and working with those missionaries under their supervision. Leadership opportunities are rotated among qualified missionaries in order to provide experience to as many as possible.

TEACHING THE GOSPEL

The principal responsibilities of missionaries are to teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to those wishing to hear it, to baptize those desiring baptism, and to help local church members strengthen new converts in their recently adopted faith. All of these responsibilities depend in the first instance on finding people to teach. Missionaries locate “investigators” in a number of ways. Local members introduce them to family members, friends, and acquaintances. Where church messages are broadcast on television or radio, potential investigators often seek out the missionaries directly. Where permitted by local law and custom, missionaries “tract” by going door to door; where tracting is not permitted, the missionaries merely extend an invitation to learn more to those persons whom they encounter in the normal course of daily life.

When someone expresses interest in learning more, the missionaries meet with him or her in a series of discussions organized according to a standard lesson plan. Based upon foundational scriptures, this lesson plan presents basic doctrinal principles in an organized manner designed to assist the sincere investigator to a fuller understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As President Hinckley recently said, “[We are] not argumentative. We do not debate. We, in effect, simply say to others, ‘Bring all the good that you have and let us see if we can add to it.’”⁴⁰

Missionaries explain gospel principles, but each investigator must ascertain the truthfulness of such principles by personal study and prayer.⁴¹ Each additional step is predicated on the investigator's interest. The missionaries invite investigators to attend church meetings and to make key commitments, such as to pray, to read the Book of Mormon and other scriptures, and, eventually, to be baptized once the Spirit witnesses that the teachings of the missionaries are true.⁴² Agreement to such commitments leads naturally to baptism; unwillingness to make such commitments gracefully terminates the discussions with the missionaries. Because of the profound importance of each person's moral agency, the desires of the investigators are always paramount and determinative. They will be invited—even urged—but not pressured or coerced.

Missionary work is not a numbers game or a recruiting exercise. The goal of the church's missionary program is baptism and eternal life for those who accept the increased understanding and ordinances offered by the missionaries. That understanding teaches that baptism and eternal life are the greatest of all the gifts of God and are available to all God's children.

Baptism and the acceptance of membership in the church are a significant, life-changing commitment. By modern revelation, the Lord has set forth the following requirements to be baptized into the church:

All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the Church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his Church (Doctrine and Covenants 20:37).

Since baptism is for the remission of sins, it must be preceded by genuine repentance. Among other things, this means that a person applying for baptism commits (1) to live a good and Christian life; (2) to adhere to principles of strict virtue and chastity; (3) to keep the Lord's law of health (the Word of Wisdom); (4) to attend church meetings regularly; (5) to serve actively in the church; and (6) to contribute one-tenth of his or her income annually to the Lord as tithing, as well as other offerings.

Why are people willing to make such commitments? The answer is found in the testimony of individual converts that they are joining the church of Jesus Christ restored to the earth in these latter days and that the authority by which they are being baptized is in very deed the priesthood of God, efficacious in this world and in the world to come. The message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that it has that priesthood and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It extends an invitation to every man, woman, and child upon the earth to "come and see."

CHURCH ACTIVITIES WITH INCIDENTAL MISSIONARY EFFECTS

While the spirit of missionary work is woven into the very fabric of the church, not every church activity is intended to produce converts. Some have an effect on missionary work only incidentally and unintentionally. The same spirit of concern for all people that motivates formal missionary work inspires other church activities, such as those focusing on temporal welfare and humanitarian services.

Welfare Program

The church is concerned with the temporal and physical welfare of its members as well as their spiritual well-being. Less than a year after the church was organized in 1830, the Lord revealed to the church through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “[T]hou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken” (Doctrine and Covenants 42:30). The bishop and his counselors were appointed by the Lord to the particular stewardship of husbanding the “substance” set aside for the benefit of the poor. This concern for the poor and needy of the church has developed into an extensive commodity system of “bishop’s storehouses” and includes monthly cash “fast offerings” contributed by church members, both used to assist the poor.

Every member has ready access to these welfare resources. Bishops authorize distribution of commodities from the storehouses and dispense fast-offering funds when commodities will not meet a particular need. Members must look first for help from their extended families before turning to the church. Those receiving church assistance are expected to work for what they receive. Since assistance is intended to be for limited duration, bishops and other church leaders help those assisted to regain the capability to provide for themselves. Thus, want is alleviated while preserving the dignity of the individual.

Just as welfare is not administered as a dole for members, neither is it used as an incentive to bring people into the church. Pre-baptismal interviews determine the willingness of a baptismal candidate to accept the obligations of membership and filter out any who might be seeking membership for ulterior reasons. Rather than being a “meal ticket,” church membership is an opportunity for service to others. As stated in Latter-day Saint scripture:

[N]ow, as ye [baptismal candidates] are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light;

Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort. . . .

Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord? (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 18:8-10).⁴³

Humanitarian Services

The same concern for people that sparks LDS missionary work and the welfare program for church members also motivates humanitarian assistance to the poor and needy of the world without regard to their religious affiliation. Indeed, church humanitarian aid is intended primarily for those who are not Mormons. To avoid any risk that such aid might be misunderstood as a subtle inducement to seek membership, this humanitarian aid is not distributed by missionaries or through the church's missionary organization. Rather, the church acts through a satellite organization, Latter-day Saint Charities, in distributing vast quantities of food, clothing, and material, as well as financial assistance.

This humanitarian work extends across the earth in dozens of countries where assistance with health, sanitation, and personal hygiene are desperately needed. In the immediate wake of earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons, floods, famines, wars, and other disasters, the church has distributed cash contributions and large quantities of needed commodities and supplies.

While humanitarian and charitable aid have been given throughout the history of the church, such aid has significantly increased in recent years. Since 1985 the church has been involved in more than 2,340 humanitarian projects in 137 countries (including Mexico, Bangladesh, China, the Philippines, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, North Korea, and Ethiopia, to name only a few), contributing over \$170 million worth of aid. In addition, the church supports and promotes a wide array of humanitarian initiatives around the world, such as village banking in Guatemala, micro-enterprise projects in Armenia, surgical initiatives in the Philippines, and vocational skill training in India. In 1996 alone the church distributed more than 1 million pounds of medical and educational equipment and supplies in seventy countries and sufficient clothing for an estimated 8.7 million people in fifty-eight countries. In North Korea, where the church has no members, assistance has amounted to \$3.1 million and has included 2,150 tons of corn, powdered milk, flour, and medical supplies, 400 tons of fertilizer, pesticides, and seeds, and more than 500 seedling apple trees. In 1999 the church sent over 2.5 million pounds of food, clothing, blankets, and soap, and over \$500,000 in cash contributions to help refugees from Kosovo.⁴⁴ Where possible, humanitarian projects are designed to help strengthen individual self-reliance and local autonomy, instead of merely providing a handout. Thus, the church donated twenty-five tractors to help the cleanup and farming efforts of returning Kosovar refugees.

One moving example of such assistance came in the aftermath of World War II. In 1946 and 1947 Dutch members of the church sent some 160 tons of potatoes to Germany, even though they themselves were still on meager rations. In 1985 members of the church were asked to participate in two "fast Sundays" (that is, to donate the value of two meals not eaten on those days) to assist the hungry in Ethiopia. The proceeds of this endeavor ultimately totaled \$9.6 million distributed in food and other necessary goods to starving

Ethiopians, virtually entirely through non-LDS channels such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent and Catholic Relief Services.⁴⁵

All such humanitarian aid is distributed without strings. The church does not seek “rice Christians.” Rather, such assistance is given in love to help those in need without regard to their religious affiliation or interest in Mormonism.

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

In a letter dated March 1, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith responded to a request from Mr. John Wentworth, the editor and proprietor of the *Chicago Democrat*, for a written “sketch of the rise, progress, persecution, and faith of the Latter-day Saints.”⁴⁶ After giving the requested historical information, the Prophet’s response, the “Wentworth Letter,” concludes with thirteen short declarative statements summarizing the central doctrines of the church. These have since been extracted and canonized in a doctrinal statement known as the Articles of Faith. Two of these Articles of Faith are directly pertinent in describing the church’s attitude toward governments and their rightful place in the religious affairs of men.

A COMMITMENT TO OBEY, HONOR, AND SUSTAIN THE LAW

The Twelfth Article of Faith states: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law” (Articles of Faith, Pearl of Great Price). Events occurring shortly after this declaration illustrate the seriousness of the Latter-day Saints’ commitment to this principle.

The early history of the church was marred by intense persecution. Some of this was in response to Joseph Smith’s claim that he had seen and conversed with God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and other heavenly beings. Some of it was spawned by economic and political jealousies in the developing communities along the remote western frontier where the church had its origins. Whatever its causes, the effect of the persecution was to force the Mormons to move repeatedly. Initially organized in upstate New York, the main body of the church moved to Kirtland, Ohio, and then in succession to Jackson County, Missouri; Daviess and Caldwell Counties, Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and ultimately to the Great Basin. In each frontier community, law enforcement was either impotent or in league with those conspiring against the Mormons. Repeated appeals to state officials in Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and even to the United States government elicited no protection.

Then, in June 1844, Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were assassinated by a mob while incarcerated in Carthage, Illinois.⁴⁷ By February 1846 mob persecution around Nauvoo, Illinois, where most church members were then congregated, became so intense that the Mormon people were forced to commence their withdrawal from Illinois. Though it was the dead of winter,

many Mormons, under the leadership of Brigham Young, loaded what belongings they could into wagons and, abandoning their comfortable homes, crossed the frozen Mississippi River and headed west across Iowa. Within eight months virtually all had left Nauvoo—the last group at gunpoint! The privation and suffering of the Saints as they struggled across Iowa, destitute and mired in a seemingly endless sea of mud, was heart-rending. They were homeless, with only the great wilderness before them. With the Rocky Mountains their destination, they were leaving the United States.

Into that desperate situation, in late June 1846, Captain James Allen of the 1st U.S. Dragoons rode with an urgent appeal to the Mormons from the United States government. The United States had declared war on Mexico, and President James K. Polk asked the Mormons to raise a battalion of five hundred men to march to Santa Fe as part of General Stephen Kearny's Army of the West. To rank-and-file Mormons, this appeal was stupefying. Not only would their indigent families be left without able-bodied men, but this appeal was coming from the very government that had stood by disinterestedly time and again while mobs forced their depredations upon the Mormons, sometimes under color of state law. In the minds of some, they had every right to ignore the appeal and to turn their backs on the United States.

President Brigham Young, their leader, saw it differently. For one thing, the Saints could use the soldiers' wages to buy needed equipment and supplies for the trek west to the Great Basin. More fundamentally, their country was in need, and their government had called. President Young decided: the Saints would respond to the call. At his personal appeal, the Mormon Battalion was organized, literally overnight. Its 497 men marched away leaving wives and mothers, sisters and daughters to provide and care for their needy families. Their country had called, and the Mormons responded.

Suffering tremendous hardships, the Mormon Battalion ultimately pioneered a road across the Great American Desert to San Diego on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, a road that would later be followed by many thousands seeking their fortunes in California. The Mormon Battalion's march of more than two thousand miles was to be the longest foot march of infantry in the nation's history. Their courage and fortitude is a storied chapter in the history of the United States. It stands as a monument to church members' deep commitment to their Twelfth Article of Faith.

Latter-day Saints are law-abiding and loyal citizens. They obey the law, participate in the affairs of government at all levels, vote in elections, and serve in the armed forces of their respective nations. No government need ever view with suspicion the Latter-day Saint congregations within its borders. To the contrary, it can take comfort in the assurance that none of its citizens is more committed to "obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law" than its Mormon citizens.

In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1831, the Lord said: "Let no man break the laws of the land, for he that keepeth the laws of God hath no need to break the laws of the land" (Doctrine and Covenants 58:21). Accordingly,

Latter-day Saints take seriously the Savior's admonition: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's" (Mt 22:21). This philosophy is manifest in the church's missionary program.

Most nations have specific legal requirements governing religion and religious representatives. While there are many similarities, each country has its own different requirements. Most require churches to register with the national government; many also require registration at the regional and/or local level as a condition of holding meetings, acquiring real property, opening bank accounts, and engaging in missionary activity. In some countries foreign religious representatives may need visas.

The church strives to identify and to comply with all legal requirements. It approaches every nation through the "front door" (that is, by complying with legal requirements). It expects its missionaries to abide by the law of the jurisdiction where they are serving and to respect local customs and culture.

GOVERNMENT'S DUTY TO GUARANTEE THE RIGHT TO WORSHIP

Latter-day Saints, who believe in "rendering unto Caesar" that which is properly Caesar's, also believe that governments have a responsibility to distinguish between "the things which are Caesar's" and "the things which are God's" and to guarantee religious freedom for the latter.

The church's Eleventh Article of Faith states: "We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may" (Articles of Faith, Pearl of Great Price).

In furtherance of the God-given right of moral agency, including the right to hear and to choose among competing philosophies, doctrines, and religions, Latter-day Saints believe that governments have a solemn duty to protect and preserve that agency to every person within the reach of their jurisdictions. The church's declaration of belief states:

We believe that no government can exist in peace, except such laws are framed and held inviolate as will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life (Doctrine and Covenants 134:2).

No government can long endure that does not secure these basic freedoms to its citizens. The scrap heap of history is strewn with the tattered remnants of regimes that behaved otherwise.

The Book of Mormon account of an ancient people in the Americas records what modern history teaches with tragic eloquence, namely, that the fire of freedom burns naturally in the human breast:

And now the design of the Nephites was to support their lands and their houses, and their wives, and their children, that they might preserve them

from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their rights and their privileges, yea and also their liberty, that they might worship God according to their desires (Book of Mormon, Alma 43:9).

Nevertheless, the Nephites were inspired by a better cause [than their enemies], for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church (Book of Mormon, Alma 43:45).

The chronicles of God, as with the chronicles of history, teach that every man recognizes in his heart the God-given gift of freedom, or agency. Truly, “no government *can* exist in peace” that does not guarantee this to its citizens.

In no aspect of life are these fundamental freedoms more important than as they relate to every man’s freedom of worship—his moral agency. Mormons believe that “[i]t is [not] just to mingle religious influence with civil government” (Doctrine and Covenants 134:9). This means that “religious societ[ies] [do not have] authority to try men on the right of property or life . . . ” (ibid., 10).⁴⁸ But government also has a duty to preserve moral agency. The Latter-day Saint declaration of belief states:

We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him, and to him only, for the exercise of it unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotions; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul (Doctrine and Covenants 134:4).

Within broad limits relating to legitimate concerns for health and safety, government has no place in directly or indirectly regulating matters of conscience, including religious opinion, expression, and exercise. Every person should be free in choosing who, where, and how he worships and his “forms for public or private devotions.” The church believes that it is beyond the legitimate powers of government to compel membership or participation in one church while preventing or restricting them in another. Once again, as a voice from the dust, come these divine principles defining the rightful roles of government and individual conscience as they existed in an ancient American civilization:

And it came to pass that king Mosiah sent a proclamation throughout the land round about that there should not any unbeliever persecute any of those who belonged to the church of God. And there was a strict command throughout all the churches that there should be no persecutions

among them, *that there should be an equality among all men* (Book of Mormon, Mosiah 27:2-3, emphasis added).

Mormons believe deeply that one of government's most fundamental duties is to preserve "an equality among all men" when it comes to matters of religion and conscience. Every person is entitled to the right to speak his or her mind on such matters, and everyone else has the right to listen, or not. Every person is entitled to exercise the right to worship where, how, and as he or she pleases.

And every citizen, while exercising his or her own rights, has the duty to respect those same rights in others. Government has no stake in any point of view. Its only legitimate role between its citizens on such matters is to maintain their individual rights:

We believe that . . . governments have a right, and are bound to enact laws for the protection of all citizens in the free exercise of their religious belief; but we do not believe that they have a right in justice to deprive citizens of this privilege, or proscribe them in their opinions, so long as a regard and reverence are shown to the laws and such religious opinions do not justify sedition nor conspiracy (Doctrine and Covenants 134:7).

Hence, while some may assert that there is an inherent conflict between a religionist's exercise of his religion, including his need to express his convictions, and the right of others not to suffer the imposition of his exercise, for Latter-day Saints there is no tension between the Great Commission and the Golden Rule. Latter-day Saints desire the opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as they understand it to any and all who wish to listen, they accord every other man that same right, and they acknowledge that all have the right not to listen. They pledge to honor such principles and ask only that government guarantee them that right and protect them in its exercise.

What does the church expect from government in practical terms? Simply put, the church asks for room to perform its divine mission to preach the gospel to all men and women, who have a right to *hear it* and *choose* for themselves whether to embrace it. As a minimum, this means the following:

1. *The right to worship.* Church members should have the right to practice their religion without interference by the agencies of government.
2. *The right to meet together.* Church members should have the right to meet together in public and in private in adequate facilities and without government scrutiny. The right of assembly is basic to religious freedom.
3. *The right to self-governance.* The church claims the right to non-interference by government in its internal affairs. Church doctrines and practices should be free from government regulation. The church has the right to determine who will serve as its officers, how long they will serve, and how the affairs of the church will be conducted.

4. *The right to communicate with church members.* Church members should have the right to regular communication with church leaders and other members, whether in person, in writing, or electronically. Such communications should not be prohibited, impeded, monitored, or otherwise interfered with.
5. *The right to legal entity status and action.* While the church respects the right of government to establish reasonable requirements for churches to become recognized as a legal entity, it asserts that it has a right to legal recognition upon reasonable conditions. Thus recognized, the church should be able to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, to open bank accounts, and to transact business necessary to church operations.
6. *The right to declare beliefs publicly.* Church missionaries should have the right to proclaim the gospel individually or before assemblies of people. This should include the right to print and distribute literature explaining the teachings and doctrines of the church, the right to display videos, tape recordings, and other electronic or graphic presentations concerning the church and its beliefs, and the right of reasonable access to the public press, radio, and television to disseminate messages and information concerning the church and its teachings.
7. *The right to travel freely.* Church members should have the right to travel freely to attend church meetings and activities and to visit with other members. Similarly, full-time missionaries and other church representatives, even if citizens of another nation, should have the right, consistent with reasonable government regulations, to enter the government's jurisdiction and to proclaim the gospel and participate in church meetings and activities.

On its part, the church reaffirms its commitment to obey the law and to respect the rights of all persons. As previously mentioned, high-pressure salesmanship, coercion, and inducement are not part of the church's program or approach. Consistent with the "come and see" principle, missionaries and other church representatives fulfill their callings by inviting those whom they meet to learn more. Courtesy and good will are the hallmarks of the approach of church representatives and members to nonmembers. They see their duty to "witness" in the first instance as extending an invitation and subsequently to explain gospel principles to those who wish to learn them.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

What pertains between individuals should also pertain between organizations. The principle of moral agency, central to the very purpose of morality, must be as sacrosanct in relationships with religious organizations as in relationships with individuals. Each church deserves to be respected in its legitimate

individual operations. In addition, there is a pressing need for cooperative action in today's world. In a time of wrenching poverty, increasing intolerance, and cascading evil and immorality in many communities, religious organizations sharing common principles have ample opportunities for shared action to improve the overall welfare of the community.

Because of the nature of its divine mandate, the church is not free to engage in ecumenical discourse aimed at amalgamating its doctrines with other denominations. At the levels of doctrine and ecclesiastical polity, the church understands itself as a restored church charged with maintaining its integrity and independence from all other religious organizations. For this reason, the church does not engage in ecumenical dialogue aimed at homogenizing or compromising doctrine.

However, the church regards interfaith efforts differently than ecumenism in the foregoing sense. Churches can cooperate on an interfaith basis on common principles without compromising their own doctrines and teachings. Thus, the church welcomes interfaith opportunities for joint venturing of worthwhile projects in areas of common concern. Such projects may include alleviating the effects of poverty and homelessness, fostering standards of community decency (especially for children and youth), strengthening families, and championing laws buttressing morality, to name only a few. Such projects do not require an amalgamation of beliefs and doctrines, only mutual respect and a common purpose.

Despite its independence and the singularity of its beliefs, the church regards other churches and religions with good will. Although Utah is predominantly Mormon, the church has over the years assisted its Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant friends in a variety of ways, from making contributions to the remodeling or refurbishing of a church, cathedral, or synagogue to the sharing of facilities with other congregations temporarily dislocated from their usual places of worship.⁴⁹ When representatives of other denominations come to Utah, the church's attitude is as expressed recently by President Gordon B. Hinckley, "We are going to welcome them. We are going to do everything we can to make them feel at home."⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

A genuine courtesy for others and respect for their beliefs is a hallmark of Latter-day Saints' relationship with others. Rather than attempting to challenge others' beliefs, they merely proffer the additional truths of the restored gospel to augment truths already possessed. Hence, Mormons manifest a sincere good will for other churches and for those with differing beliefs. This neighborliness and respect are an application of Mormon doctrine.

As a matter of principle, the Mormons are law-abiding and good citizens, and they conscientiously seek the good will of governments. But they also expect that governments and their representatives will reciprocate that same

respect, good will, and cooperation. The right to worship, to hold meetings without governmental interference, to enjoy unfettered self-governance, to receive legal recognition, and to communicate among themselves as well as with others are among the rights they believe governments should guarantee to them and to all churches.

Mormon missionaries go about their work in accordance with these commitments and expectations. Serving for two years in the midst of the people, they master their language and embrace their culture. Traveling in pairs and observing a strict code of moral rectitude and comely appearance, these young men and women strive to reflect in their lives the precepts of the gospel truths they are teaching.

The driving force behind the work of missionaries and members of the church is their strongly felt spiritual duty to witness of Jesus Christ and his restored gospel to every nation and people. Their history has abundant evidence of the sincerity of their missionary efforts and their willingness to sacrifice for them. Their record of rapid growth for over 150 years, culminating in a present worldwide membership of over 10 million, shows that their message is meaningful to many.

In carrying out their duty to witness, Mormons have two external restraints. Since the observance of law is strictly required, they must comply with all legal requirements in seeking admission to nations and in delivering their message. And since moral agency—the right of every soul to choose what he or she will believe and practice—is a fundamental tenet of the faith, Mormons cannot seek converts by coercion or consideration but only by invitation and persuasion. The proofs of their message are found in the lives of the members and in the witness of the Spirit. Their invitation to all the world is, “Come and see.”

12. THE MISSIONARY WORK OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

1. The term *missionary work* is preferred by Mormons, who rarely use the term *evangelism*. For them, *proselyting* is synonymous with missionary work, connoting religious persuasion in its most positive sense without any of the coercive connotations some infer from that term.

2. This is a personal expression and not an official statement of the church.

3. The term *Saints* is used in its biblical sense of members of the church who are striving for holiness (see, e.g., Acts 9:13, 32, 41; Rom 1:7).

4. The canonical texts or standard works of the church are the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants (a compilation of modern revelations), and the Pearl of Great Price (another compilation).

5. See, generally, Joseph Smith—History, in Pearl of Great Price; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, Ill., 1984).

6. See, generally, “Book of Mormon,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York, 1992), 1:139-216.

7. See, generally, Gerald N. Lund, “Plan of Salvation,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1088-91; M. Russell Ballard, *Our Search for Happiness* (Salt Lake City, 1993).

8. See, generally, James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City, 1984); Jeffrey R. Holland, “Atonement of Jesus Christ” and various authors’ articles on “Jesus Christ,” all in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:82-86, 2:723-53.

9. See Rev. 12:7-9.

10. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor 15:22).

11. Latter-day Saints’ understanding of original sin and of the Fall is illuminated by their understanding of individual moral accountability, as expressed in the church’s Second Article of Faith: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression” (Pearl of Great Price).

12. “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:25).

13. “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23).

14. See Jan Shippo and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin* (Urbana and Chicago, 1994), 5-7, 14, 18, 382-84.

15. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 8 vols. (Salt Lake City, 1948), 2:490.

16. Orson F. Whitney, *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City, 1992), 104.

17. *Ibid.*

18. See Lk 10:4; Doctrine and Covenants 24:18, 84:78.

19. See Lk 22:35-36.

20. See 1 Cor 11:16; 2 Cor 12:20; 2 Tm 2:24-25; Ti 3:9; Jas 1:19-20.

21. *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2:262.

22. *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, 1978), 157.

23. *Ibid.*, 235.

24. See James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission* (Salt Lake City, 1992); V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1837-1987* (Solihull, West Midlands, England, 1987), 104-62.

25. *Our Heritage* (Salt Lake City, 1996), 56-57.

26. See Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 301.

27. See "Minutes of the General Conference of 6 October 1849," General Church Minutes Collection, Historical Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

28. "Remarks of George A. Smith" (August 28, 1852), in "Minutes of Conference," *Deseret News* (September 18, 1852).

29. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (1984): 18.

30. See *Deseret News, 1997-98 Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, 1996), 529-31.

31. See Rodney Stark, "So Far, So Good: A Brief Assessment of Mormon Membership Projections," *Review of Religious Research* 38 (1996): 176; Kay H. Smith, "Conversion," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:323.

32. Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," 18.

33. See Doctrine and Covenants 69:2-8.

34. "I Hope They Call Me on a Mission," *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City, 1995), 169.

35. *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, 1985).

36. "Go, Ye Messengers of Glory," in *ibid.*, no. 262.

37. "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," in *ibid.*, no. 270.

38. "Called to Serve," in *ibid.*, no. 249.

39. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City, 1997), 258-59.

40. President Gordon B. Hinckley, "The BYU Experience," *Brigham Young University Speeches* (1997-98), 64.

41. See Book of Mormon, Moroni 10:4-5: "And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."

42. President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated: "[Conversion] is the great process by which those with responsive hearts listen to the teachings and testimonies of missionaries and change their lives, leaving the past behind them, and moving forward into a new life. There is no miracle quite like it in all the world" (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 144).

43. Amulek, a famous missionary in the Book of Mormon, emphasized this same duty of service as a qualification for church membership even more bluntly: "And now behold, my beloved brethren [of the church], I say unto you . . . if ye turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need—I say unto you, if ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain, and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith" (Book of Mormon, Alma 34:28).

44. Figures on North Korea are from President Thomas S. Monson, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?," *Church News* (November 29, 1997), 3, 6. Figures on Kosovo are from "Humanitarian Service," *Church News* (July 17, 1999); *Congressional Record*, August 5, 1999, 510366.

45. Monson, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?," 40.

46. *History of the Church*, 4:535.

47. See generally, Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana and Chicago, 1975).

48. The full text of Doctrine and Covenants 134:9-10 is as follows:

We do not believe it just to mingle religious influence with civil government, whereby one religious society is fostered and another proscribed in its spiritual privileges, and the individual rights of its members, as citizens, denied. We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members for disorderly conduct, according to the rules and regulations of such societies; provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing; but we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world's goods, or to put them in jeopardy of either life or limb, or to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship."

49. See, e.g., Bernice Maher Mooney, "The Cathedral of the Madeleine," *Utah Historical Quarterly* (Spring 1981); "Soup Kitchen Equipped," *Church News* (January 17, 1987); "LDS Ward Building Given to Salvation Army," *Church News* (June 25, 1988); "Church Lends to Charitable Center," *Church News* (March 24, 1990); "President Monson Represents LDS Church at Ceremony in Catholic Cathedral," *Church News* (February 27, 1993); "Madeleine's Miracle," *Salt Lake City* (Winter 1993); "Jewish Congregations Note High Holy Days in LDS Meetinghouses," *Church News* (September 25, 1993); "Helping Rebuild Burned Chapels," *Church News* (November 9, 1996).

50. Hinckley, "The BYU Experience," 64.