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MISSIONARY MATERIALS AND METHODS: A PRELIMINARY STUDY

ON October 15, 2004, a Church satellite broadcast introduced mission leaders around the world to the new *Preach My Gospel* missionary guide. The introduction of this manual was the latest contribution to a century-old discussion regarding the best way for missionaries to present the gospel message. The Church leaders who introduced *Preach My Gospel* reflected on past materials and methods of missionary instruction and concluded that changing times required “an improved way to share the fulness of the truth that God has placed on earth again.”¹

To even a casual observer, it was apparent that the *Preach My Gospel* program emphasis was the next step in an ongoing effort to improve missionary effectiveness. A historical review of the changes in missionary methods and materials through the years provides insight into the forces that influence such change and how these changes then affect the way missionaries teach the

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gospel. This discussion will focus on a selection of methods and materials that characterized missionary work at various times in the history of the Church. The purpose of such a discussion is to promote an appreciation of how the Lord works with his servants in the context of history to improve their effectiveness.

BACKGROUND

Early LDS missionaries who accepted calls to serve received a promise that if they asked of the Lord, they would receive, and if they knocked, a way would open for them (see D&C 11:5). It then followed that as they prayed for assistance in preaching the gospel, they would develop a variety of methods and materials that reflected the insight that came through their experiences and prayers. The early missionaries accepted the Lord's admonition to "teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel" (D&C 42:12). Because they received little or no direct instruction or materials other than to teach from scriptural texts, these early missionaries relied on their own natural abilities as magnified by the Spirit to help them know how to proceed.

ITINERANT PREACHING AND TRACTING

During the first two decades of the Church, LDS missionaries preached the restored gospel in a context dominated by the itinerant street preachers of the time. In response to accounts of the biblical missionaries, the itinerant tradition accepted the admonition of Christ to go forth and declare the kingdom of God to the "uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8; see also Luke 10:1–9). They typically lacked formal training and believed that to be fully effective, they must be preachers "who combined learning with forceful delivery" in a passionate appeal that prompted their audiences to experience a spiritual witness of their message.²

Lacking formal training, nineteenth-century LDS missionaries labored in a manner similar to that of the itinerant preachers mentioned above. The

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experiences of the first LDS missionaries to Britain provide case evidence for this conclusion.³ At that time, street preaching in Britain had reached new heights, led by nonconformist ministers such as George Whitefield and others who attracted thousands to hear the word of God.⁴ Likewise, Mormon elders preached in church buildings and public halls. When these were not available, they preached in homes and in public squares, where crowds frequently gathered to participate in public discussions of political and religious doctrines.

The LDS missionaries also held the same populist perspective as the nonconformist preachers of the time. Deference to clerical authority and tradition was less important than the reality that individuals could read the scriptures for themselves and learn the truths contained therein. The approach was also characterized by optimism because salvation was open to all who sought the Lord and trusted in his promises.⁵ The nonconformist preachers based their methods on the assumption that spontaneous speaking provided evidence that the Holy Ghost was directing their words.⁶ Building on the success of this tradition, the Mormon missionaries enthusiastically declared their message of apostasy, restoration, an expanded scriptural canon, and the promise of Zion. Like their peers, they accepted that extemporaneous preaching demonstrated to the audience that the Holy Spirit was indeed guiding their message. Using a populist style familiar to those listening only amplified the power of the missionaries' message.⁷

Mormon missionaries also adopted the existing practice of distributing religious tracts as part of their effort to preach the restored gospel.⁸ Historically, the word *tract* referred to a leaflet, pamphlet, or other publication distributed publicly to inform or persuade public opinion.⁹ With the rise of the religious reformers, tracts became more aggressive and began to promote religious dissension in an attempt to reform established churches or lead people away to new congregations.¹⁰ John Wesley believed that relatively few read the Bible because they "have no relish for it." Therefore, Wesley produced religious tracts that he believed people would read. To facilitate this work, he established the Society for the Distribution of Religious Tracts and became the first to use religious tracts on a large scale.¹¹

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Like Wesley and others, the Mormon elders also accepted the importance of distributing their message through published tracts. Finding it a challenge to distribute large quantities of the Book of Mormon, missionaries developed tracts that summarized Church doctrine and invited readers to learn more about the Restoration.¹² During this period, the tracts used by the missionaries defined the primary missionary message and served as a method of attracting investigators.

In 1837, Parley P. Pratt developed one of the first LDS tracts while serving as a missionary in New York. Accepting the prevailing use of the religious tract, Pratt wrote and published a two-hundred-page booklet titled *Voice of Warning*.¹³ It became the first publication intended for missionary use in the Church. Later, as part of the British Mission experience, the missionaries created a variety of additional religious tracts. Typical of these publications were the *Millennial Star*, published in broadside form (1840),¹⁴ and *A[n] Interesting Account* (1840).¹⁵ At the height of the British missionary effort, itinerant preaching and the distribution of tracts served as a major method of attracting individuals to the message of the restored gospel. The Mormon tracts, combined with the missionaries' preaching, proved successful—not because of an original format or style of presentation but because of their unique content and spirit.

FIRST DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS

At the end of the nineteenth century, secular journalists “published defamatory articles about the Church in popular magazines such as *Pearson's*, *Everybody's Magazine*, *McClure's*, and *Cosmopolitan*.”¹⁶ Such publications propagated a negative image of the Church throughout the United States and Europe through attacks upon the Mormon practice of plural marriage and a perceived church oligarchy.¹⁷ In an effort to combat erroneous information, leaders of the Church authored increasingly sophisticated publications that responded to false accusations and clarified the beliefs of the

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Church. Representative of such efforts were B. H. Roberts's *The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles* (1888);¹⁸ *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel* (1892), by Franklin D. Richards;¹⁹ and *The Articles of Faith* (1899), written by James E. Talmage.²⁰ Missionaries used these progressively sophisticated publications to guide them as they taught the gospel to an increasingly critical audience.

In 1903, the *Elders' Journal*, a publication of the South States Mission, appeared to recognize a relationship between missionary training and missionary effectiveness. Therefore, this mission publication regularly provided written guidelines that trained missionaries in the effective use of tracts in contacting and teaching investigators. Issues of the *Journal* suggested ideas for effectively presenting the gospel message and added practical advice related to mission rules and practices.²¹

Further efforts to provide instruction for missionaries also appeared later in publications such as *The Elders' Reference* (1913)²² and *The Elders' Manual* (1918).²³ These missionary guides included instruction on such topics as personal preparation, effective public speaking, proselyting approaches, mission rules, and mission administration. They also suggested practical methods for devising daily schedules and gospel study plans.²⁴ While such publications proved useful, they supplied little direct information on specific teaching methods.²⁵

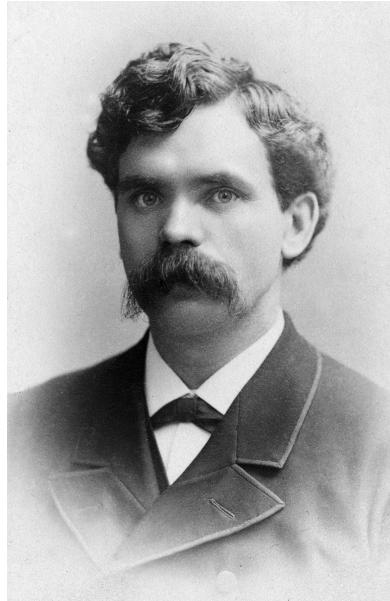
However, recognition of the need to prepare missionaries continued to grow. Recognizing this need, Elder Brigham H. Roberts, a member of the Seventy, published a variety of articles and tracts intended to define a systematic approach to tracting and teaching.²⁶ His pamphlet *On Tracting* (1924) provided training in the use of printed material as the main missionary contact and teaching method. He wrote, "Tracting is the backbone of missionary work,"²⁷ and he assumed that the effective distribution of religious tracts led to missionary success. Elder Roberts was one of the first to define a systematic approach to teaching by identifying guidelines for the effective use of tracts in a teaching situation. The general portion of his work covered topics such as "On acquiring knowledge necessary to efficiency in

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tracting” and “How to enjoy tract-ing.” Regarding the preparation of missionaries, Roberts noted, “In this system . . . a sort of elementary booklet was presented to the missionaries giving in very brief form an account of Mormonism.”²⁸

Central to Roberts’s approach was a systematic presentation of eight tracts as part of the finding and teaching process. Roberts referred to the first two as “drop tracts” because the missionaries distributed them without personal contact. He assumed that by following up on these tracts, missionaries would increase their teaching opportunities. When this happened, the missionaries presented tract number three, which focused on the Joseph Smith account, in a teaching setting. During the teaching process, missionaries taught concepts from tracts four and five, which covered the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the priesthood. If the investigator remained interested, they would then present a series of four tracts titled *Why Mormonism?* (ca. 1900).²⁹ In following this system, missionaries distributed large numbers of the initial tracts with the hope that these tracts would attract interest in the Church. When this occurred, they would sequentially discuss the tracts prescribed in Roberts’s system. This system of tracts defined both the method of attracting interest as well as the content taught to the investigator.

While it was a step forward in helping missionaries become more effective, Roberts’s method represented the prevailing perspective on missionary



Elder Brigham H. Roberts published articles and tracts to help prepare missionaries. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

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methods, which assumed that published tracts were essential to the content and organization of the teaching approach. From this perspective, mission leaders assumed that, if given improved religious tracts, the missionaries would be better prepared to know how to teach the gospel. For this reason, Church leaders such as Elders James E. Talmage, Charles W. Penrose, and John A. Widtsoe published materials such as *The Great Apostasy* (1909)³⁰ and the series *Rays of Light* (ca. 1900).³¹ Other tracts appeared in addition to those mentioned above, some written by the missionaries themselves to address a specific need or interest, such as apostasy or the plan of salvation.³² The tone and style of the tracts during this period remained formal rather than adapting the innovations exhibited in popular periodicals of the time.

DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING PLANS

In efforts to better prepare an expanding missionary force, the more conservative element continued to focus on the tracts used by the missionaries, believing that the tracts needed revision because they focused on “dogma and authority” rather than being people centered or dealing with matters of real interest to possible contacts.³³ Therefore, tracts such as *What Mormons Believe* (ca. 1900)³⁴ and Ben E. Rich’s *Friendly Discussion* (1906)³⁵ became popular because they presented the gospel message logically and in a populist style.³⁶ Rich’s popular *Friendly Discussion* became the first effort to present the gospel in a narrative format, which influenced later developments in missionary training materials.³⁷

Rich described his approach as a conversation because his style conveyed information through a narrative that was “at once simple and agreeable.”³⁸ The account presented a simulated dialogue between Rich and an imaginary “Mr. Brown” and others who were not members of the Church. To set the stage for the invented discussion, Rich asked the group if he might pose a few questions as part of a discussion on religion. He then proceeded to present a series of scripture references, followed by questions designed to

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elicit discussion from those listening. A civil and polite tone characterized the scripture-centered discussion. The assumption throughout the narrative was that the best way to explain the message of the restored gospel was through a biblical perspective. Often Rich's questions were rhetorical, but on occasion they were direct and required an answer from his characters. The discussion concluded with Rich calling upon Mr. Brown to obey the principles discussed, but it did not include a specific baptism challenge.

In 1930, new developments significantly changed the way missionaries taught the gospel. LeGrand Richards, president of the Southern States Mission, devised an improved system for teaching the gospel. For his *Message of Mormonism* (1939),³⁹ Richards seemed to prefer the tone and style of Rich's *Friendly Discussion* as a gospel-teaching approach. However, he found Rich's work inadequate because it lacked the structure necessary for missionary training. To construct such a system required defining key concepts, describing essential information, and providing a method of engaging the potential convert. Seeking to develop a systematic approach, Richards created a collection of twenty-four lessons, later called discussions, which directed missionaries to teach their investigators "once a week for at least six months . . . and present our message in a systematic and orderly manner."⁴⁰ *The Message of Mormonism* defined a sequence of key topics and supplementary readings and references, accompanied by review questions at the end of each discussion topic to engage the investigator.⁴¹ The purpose of the questions was twofold: to enable the missionaries to engage the investigators in a gospel discussion, and, at the same time, to provide a framework for the missionary to understand what he should teach. Richards carefully organized his presentation sequence followed by questions designed to develop investigator interest.⁴² By doing this, Richards moved away from the traditions of the spontaneous itinerant preachers and their tracts toward a managed, systematic approach to teaching the gospel.

Richards intended that his system would bring structure to missionary teaching and satisfy two major needs evident at the time. First, the

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plan provided the inexperienced missionary with carefully written instructions defining what to teach. Second, the questions following the textual information provided the missionaries with a guide to their own learning and with ways to engage the investigator in a gospel discussion. These materials proved very popular with other missions and contributed to the increased success of missionaries during the 1930s.

While Richards focused on improving teaching, the Church developed a general guidebook for missionary service. In 1937, the Church published *The Missionary Handbook*,⁴³ in the tradition of earlier missionary guides such as *The Elders' Reference* and *The*

Elders' Manual. Like the earlier publications, the handbook provided a standard set of instructions for missionary conduct, expectations, and general guidelines. While it did not provide lesson material as found in the work of Richards, the handbook did provide examples of first-contact dialogue.⁴⁴ In the future, this feature would serve as a precedent for those interested in developing missionary guides with a standard presentation.⁴⁵ One example of dialogue was this leading question: "In this age of so much religious confusion would it not be a fine thing if we could receive more light from the heavens to aid in showing us the true religious philosophy?"⁴⁶ The *Handbook* also suggested that the missionaries use commercial books such as *A Picture Story of Mormonism* or *The*



Elder LeGrand Richards, pictured here as a young man between 1906–09. As a mission president, Elder Richards developed a structured system to help bring structure to missionary teaching.
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Mormon Study to supplement their teaching. The use of such populist books served as the foundation for the later development of works such as the popular *Meet the Mormons*,⁴⁷ extensively used by missionaries decades later.⁴⁸ For handling investigator objections, the handbook also provided models, in the form of lectures that relied on a formal presentation of scripture-based ideas, to convince the investigator of the truth. While the handbook did not provide specific training in teaching, it did introduce a dialogue model for contacting investigators and a description of standardized missionary practices and policies.

POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALS AND METHODS

At the end of World War II, members of the Church worked diligently to restore normal patterns of Church service. Returning servicemen accepted calls to serve missions, resulting in a dramatic increase in the number of missionaries—from 400 called in 1945 to 2,297 called in 1946. Many of these new missionaries found the experience difficult because of an insufficient number of knowledgeable missionaries available to train the new elders.⁴⁹ Because of this, mission leaders increased their focus on the training and preparation of the newly expanded missionary force.

One postwar missionary, Richard L. Anderson, described how the lack of experienced missionaries influenced the work, saying, “There was nobody to teach [us] on an apprenticeship basis.”⁵⁰ Without a formal training system, many missionaries sensed a need to improve the effectiveness of their work and began to develop their own approaches. The work of LeGrand Richards served as the foundation of many of these innovations. While stationed in the South during the war, Anderson made his own attempt, drawing from his prior experience as a stake missionary.⁵¹ In the South, he had an opportunity to meet and converse with returned missionary servicemen and ask them for teaching ideas that had worked for them. From these experiences, he created a plan that, while not wholly original, did present significant new

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developments. Anderson's plan, as well as others, shared Richards's philosophy that missionary teaching should be guided by a structured system.

When Joel Richards, a brother of LeGrand Richards, accepted an appointment to serve as the president of the Northwestern States Mission, he had "considerable anxiety and [was] very much concerned over how [he] could best help [the] missionaries to systematically study the gospel and present it in a logical and convincing manner."⁵² Soon after his arrival in the mission field, he met Richard Anderson, one of his missionaries. Anderson shared his teaching plan with his president, who recognized the value of the elder's work. Richards published Anderson's plan under the title *A Plan for Effective Missionary Work*, but the missionaries soon commonly referred to it as the Anderson Plan. Within two years, the Northwestern States Mission experienced extraordinary success as convert baptisms reached the one thousand mark—"an increase of 255 percent."⁵³ President Richards said of Anderson's effort, "It has been demonstrated that this plan really works and gets results when used properly and presented under the influence of the Spirit of God."⁵⁴ Soon other missions requested the plan, resulting in thousands of copies being printed throughout the Church for missionary use.

The Anderson Plan was unique because it had a definite focus on the object and purpose of a mission and on the need for improved skill in teaching. Anderson believed that there was no room for a passive approach. He urged missionaries to place the Book of Mormon wherever they could and encouraged them to stress "the Book of Mormon as a basic ingredient for missionary work."⁵⁵ The plan stated, "We would better understand our purpose in tracting if we termed it personal contacting. . . . Passing out literature is not effective teaching—the object is to get inside."⁵⁶ As *The Missionary Handbook* did, Anderson provided a suggested dialogue to use when first meeting people. Unlike previous dialogues, however, Anderson's narrative scripted what to say when first meeting a contact and how to introduce the Book of Mormon as a witness of Christ. For each of the logical transitions in the material that followed,

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Anderson provided specific dialogue that anticipated and directed investigator responses.⁵⁷

Following the initial contact dialogue on the Book of Mormon, the Anderson Plan became more similar to the Richards Plan, which presented information in a narrative form, followed by a variety of questions. Both plans presented a chain of scriptural references used to introduce each topic, followed by a series of questions that assisted the missionary in becoming familiar with the key concepts. Like Richards, Anderson provided a variety of discussion topics that the missionary would teach over a period of several weeks, ranging from apostasy to the duties of membership. Because the plan included scripted text, missionaries began memorizing the dialogue. After Anderson returned home, several missions invited him to teach their newly called missionaries about his successful plan. Of his experience, he recalls, "I tracted with missionaries and remember in Colorado, a very bright missionary giving exactly the words of the presentation in the 'Anderson Plan.' They were my words, but it did not sound sincere on his lips. When we were through, I said, 'I just have one suggestion, scrap the memorization and tell it in your own words because that's the thing that's going to make it successful and meaningful to the person.'"⁵⁸ However, it was not long before an expanded use of memorized dialogues became prominent in the Church's missionary efforts.⁵⁹

In 1954, Church leaders reorganized the various missionary departments under a general Missionary Committee. This new committee accepted the previous efforts of Gordon B. Hinckley, the new executive secretary of the Missionary Committee, who had invited returned missionaries to Salt Lake to discuss the teaching plans they had each developed. Richard L. Anderson, a college student at the time, accepted the invitation with many others and met with Hinckley to discuss his particular teaching method. Hinckley interviewed each returned missionary, looking for ideas that would assist in the development of a new missionary approach. Eventually, he recommended "that the Missionary Department adopt a uniform curriculum."⁶⁰ Under Hinckley's leadership, the Church developed

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its first official set of standard missionary lessons known as *A Systematic Program for Teaching the Gospel* (1952).⁶¹

The new *Systematic Program* unified the missions of the Church by standardizing the teaching approach for all missionaries. It organized the material in two sections. The first section contained four headings, “The Four Phases of Proselyting,” while the second section contained the seven individual teaching lessons. Unlike prior missionary guides, such as *The Elders’ Manual* and *The Elder’s Handbook*, the *Systematic Program* focused directly on the business of becoming successful in finding, teaching, and converting potential members of the Church. Under the subheading “How to Make the First Contact,” the narrative instructed the missionary to work “with one single object in mind”—to secure a teaching appointment.⁶²

The second segment, “From Contact to Investigator,” began by encouraging the missionary to maintain a positive perspective and to assume that the contact will be receptive.⁶³ The plan’s narrative warned against being too hasty in assuming that a person would not be interested and encouraged missionaries to persist in their effort to teach. For example, if there was no answer when the missionaries knocked on the door at the appointed time, they were to locate a phone and call the person and use the dialogue provided for this occasion in an effort to secure another appointment. The discussion concluded with a sales mantra: “If you are persistent, you will enjoy success.”⁶⁴

Under the third heading, “Teaching the Investigator,” instructions invited the missionary to “seek the guiding influence of the Spirit,” followed by counsel regarding the need for enthusiasm, simplicity, and testimony.⁶⁵ Practical advice regarding where to sit in the room when teaching, how to arrange teaching materials, and how to notice and compliment the contact completed the segment. The concluding discussion focused on strategies for overcoming objections and reservations that might arise during the teaching situation. The final part, “From Investigator to Convert,” explained that individuals typically do not accept missionary invitations because of their

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“false pride” and “unrighteousness.” In spite of this, the missionary must “always work toward the goal of baptism,” remain positive, and seek to develop a friendship with their contact.⁶⁶

Section two of the *Systematic Program* provided seven scripted lessons. Like the Richards Plan and the Anderson Plan, each lesson began with an annotated list of key scriptural references used to support major topic points, followed by a “sample dialogue” that was similar in design to those found in the beginning of *The Missionary Handbook* and in the Anderson Plan. The design of the questions in the dialogue required simple recall of information presented. For example, the elder would ask, “We have discovered that God has a body of what?” The anticipated answer from the investigator would be “Flesh and bones.”⁶⁷ Using the scripted dialogue, the missionary then led the investigator into the next lesson concept. The dialogue engaged the investigator and provided positive reinforcement for participation. At first, mission leaders instructed missionaries not to memorize the lessons. The plan states, “Each presentation must be suited to the needs and interests of the individual you are teaching. . . . Without the Spirit of the Lord you have no way of knowing the needs of your investigator.”⁶⁸ In spite of these instructions, many mission presidents encouraged memorization, believing that missionaries would be more prepared if they memorized the lesson scripts.

One unique development in the *Systematic Program* approach was the inclusion of suggested drawings and illustrations to enhance investigators’ understanding. For example, in lesson six, “The Plan of Salvation,” the missionary was to draw circles to represent the premortal life, earth life, the spirit world, and the three degrees of glory. This was the first formal use of what would become the standard method of illustrating the plan of salvation throughout the Church for years to come. Following instructions provided by the lesson and using the models provided in the lesson material, the missionary created the illustration during the lesson. Later, the Missionary Department distributed a flannel-board packet as an additional teaching aid that formalized the suggested drawings.⁶⁹ The use of media,

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illustrations, and other aids to teaching and learning proved as effective in gospel presentations as they were for sales presentations.

While the *Systematic Program* proved successful in supporting and training missionaries, the Missionary Committee felt the need for further changes in the teaching materials.⁷⁰ In 1961, the Church Missionary Department presented a new set of missionary lessons titled *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators*⁷¹ at the first worldwide seminar for mission presidents, held in Salt Lake City.⁷² Employing a standard dialogue technique, the *Uniform System* provided a detailed teaching script that specifically guided the investigator to baptism.⁷³ Seeking uniformity in the missionary teaching approach, the Church directed that the *Uniform System* should replace all former missionary plans.⁷⁴ The plan states, "Follow the handbook dialogues. Stick to the logic and scriptures given in the dialogues."⁷⁵ The Missionary Committee felt the need to move toward dialogue memorization to better prepare the missionaries to teach the doctrines of the gospel.

When asked why he felt missionaries were asked to memorize the discussions, Peter Rawlins, a former administrator in the Missionary Department, stated, "My theory is that we've got a mission president with 150 to 200 missionaries, and he doesn't have a lot of control because the missionaries are spread all over the place, and he really has minimal contact with them. And I think it gives him a feeling of control to have some structure and to know what his missionaries are thinking. And when he can . . . have the missionaries pass off certain standards, it conveys a feeling of accomplishment or reaching a certain standard. There is something to that."⁷⁶

Missionaries who memorized the dialogue word for word nicknamed the plan the "Mr. Brown discussions" because of the name of the investigator used in the scripted dialogue.⁷⁷ While memorization did help many young men and women, especially missionaries called to foreign countries, some found the structure to be too demanding and rigid and sometimes became discouraged by the task of memorization. From his experience, one former elder described the plan's weakness: "[Its weakness] was the rigid

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approach with no flexibility. We were always trying to keep people on the script. [When people got off track,] the rule was to get them back on the script as fast as possible.”⁷⁸ However, not everyone serving during this period shared this perspective. Others believed that the plan provided logical structure and dialogue necessary in committing the investigator to action, which enabled the missionaries to present the remaining part of the message more naturally.⁷⁹ Even with such modifications, however, investigators often realized they were participating in a scripted discussion.

A comparison of the *Systematic Program* and the *Uniform System* reveals several interesting differences. The first obvious difference is that the *Systematic Program* provided forty pages of introductory material while the latter plan provided only two such pages, which focused on general teaching principles and instruction about discussion memorization and the use of the flannel-board visual aids. Like the *Systematic Program*, the *Uniform System* provided a list of supporting scriptures that each missionary memorized. Rather than having seven lessons as in the *Systematic Program*, the *Uniform System* had only six lessons, because it combined the first three lessons of the *Systematic Program* (“The Godhead,” “The Apostasy,” and “The Restoration”) into one lesson, “The Church of Jesus Christ.” In both lesson plans, similar lessons covered the topics of the Book of Mormon, the first principles of the gospel, and the plan of salvation. However, the *Uniform System* added a lesson entitled “Ye Shall Know the Truth,” which taught how one can learn spiritual truth and introduced the Word of Wisdom. The earlier plan did not introduce that principle until the last lesson. The final lesson in both plans challenged the investigator to accept baptism.

In terms of dialogue length, both plans contained about one hundred pages of teaching dialogue. A side-by-side comparison of the two plans demonstrates a similar approach and line of logic.⁸⁰ However, the *Uniform System* contained more direct language and specific questions that enabled the missionary to teach with greater efficiency.⁸¹ While both plans contained dialogue designed to commit the investigator to action, the commitment pattern was more direct in the *Uniform System*. Using an effective commitment

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technique, the dialogue enabled the missionary to issue specific challenges and encourage obedience to the principles taught.⁸² Questions such as “Will you continue to live this commandment?” focused attention on investigator accountability.⁸³ The more direct dialogue of the *Uniform System* reinforced the serious nature of the discussion and the expectation for action.

To supplement the standard discussions and flannel-board presentation, missionaries developed additional teaching material using Church publications such as the *Improvement Era*, the *Children’s Friend*, and newly developed tracts.⁸⁴ Understanding society’s preference for visual learning, the missionaries used photos from Church magazines to create colorful and interesting flip charts useful in making successful door approaches and as an alternative to the flannel-board presentation. Other techniques, such as administering surveys and constructing public displays, broadened the missionary approach.⁸⁵ In addition, missionaries frequently used Church-produced filmstrips and talks on tape to supplement the discussion.⁸⁶ By doing this, they paved the way for the expanded use of media and other approaches with which to supplement the basic teaching discussions.

In time, the limitations of the *Uniform System* became evident. First, memorization of the extensive dialogue proved difficult for the missionaries. The expectation was that each missionary would memorize all the discussions within a few weeks. However, this was not the case for some, who spent months struggling to memorize the standard script. Second, the standard dialogue placed investigators in a difficult situation because they sometimes felt manipulated and even, at times, coerced. Third, the standard dialogue discouraged a real gospel discussion with the investigator, who felt compelled to answer the questions posed in the discussion rather than initiate conversation outside the dialogue.⁸⁷ This led the missionaries to an increased use of flip charts, filmstrips, and other media to supplement the lessons and balance their presentation with natural discussion. Finally, the central message of the restoration of the true Church became less relevant to potential investigators coming from an increasingly secular society. This led missionaries to focus more on the family, which proved to be a common theme more acceptable

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to investigators. This change in emphasis led to further developments in missionary teaching methods that focused on the family.

CONCLUSION

In the years that followed, the Church faced a rapidly changing society in which the *Uniform System* became less relevant. Building on the emerging emphasis on the family, Church leaders modified the plan to focus on strengthening the family. While the *Uniform System* discussions remained central to the teaching plan, the presentation sequence became flexible, and lesson supplements focusing on the development of the family became part of the lesson presentation. The doctrine and many of the features remained the same as the previous plan, but mission leaders encouraged more flexibility and a more natural teaching presentation. These modifications opened the way for the Church to move away from the standard discussions, characterized by their business orientation, to a more open style that enabled the missionaries to adjust their teaching to meet individual circumstances. This trend was to continue for the rest of the twentieth century, leading to the development of the *Preach My Gospel* plan.

NOTES

1. Richard G. Scott, “The Power of *Preach My Gospel*,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 29.
2. See John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1879), 10:482–83; and O. C. Edwards Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 403.
3. For information on the British Mission, see Bryan J. Grant, “British Isles, The Church in,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:227–32.
4. Yngve Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 165. Whitefield established, more than other preachers did at the time, the concepts of “field preaching” and charismatic enthusiasm that characterized the Reformed

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- Protestant preaching of the nineteenth century. See Edward, *History of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 434, 439.
5. Edwards, *History of Preaching*, 494.
 6. Edwards, *History of Preaching*, 506.
 7. Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching* (New York: George H. Doran, 1912), 2:475–76.
 8. The use of the religious tract dates from beginnings of the Reformation movement in Europe. The reformer Wycliffe distributed hundreds of handwritten tracts as part of his public ministry. The invention of the printing press expanded the use of the religious tract, which led to the establishment of tract societies whose primary ministry was the writing and printing of religious tracts. See McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, 513. Tract societies distributed hundreds of thousands of tracts in America as well as in Europe. Mormon missionaries would have been familiar with their tone, style, and content. See Mark G. Vasquez, “The Portable Pulpit: Religious Tracts, Cultural Power, and the Risk of Reading,” *American Transcendental Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (June 2002): 89.
 9. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 518.
 10. For a more complete discussion of the development of the use of religious tracts and the establishment of evangelical tracts societies, see Isabel Rivers, “The First Evangelical Tract Society,” *Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007): 1–22; and Elizabeth Twaddell, “The American Tract Society, 1814–1860,” *Church History* 15, no. 2 (June 1946): 116–31.
 11. John McClintock and James Strong, “History of Initial Tract Enterprises (1894),” cited in *Victorian Web*, <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/tracts/history.html>.
 12. In his address to Christians, Bishop Beilby Porteus highly recommended the use of tracts because they had proven to be “a grand instrument” for the conversion of sinners and “for the edification and comfort of saints.” He also noted that the tract was “a cheap way of diffusing the knowledge of religion” because they were small and relatively cheap to print. Bishop Beilby Porteus, *An Address to Christians*,

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- Recommending the Distribution of Cheap Religious Tracts* (London: T. Williams, Ludgate Hill, 1799), 4.
13. Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 211.
 14. *The Millennial Star* (Manchester, England: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1837), as noted in James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 252.
 15. Orson Pratt, *A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840).
 16. William G. Hartley, “The Church Grows in Strength,” *Ensign*, September 1999, 32.
 17. See Joan Smyth Iverson, *The Antipolygamy Controversy in U.S. Women’s Movements, 1880–1925: A Debate on the American Home* (New York: Garland, 1997).
 18. B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel: An Exposition of Its First Principles and Man’s Relationship to Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965).
 19. Franklin D. Richards, *A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1892).
 20. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899).
 21. See *Elders’ Journal*, September 1903, 1–4. During the first decade of the twentieth century, this journal of the Southern States Mission and its successor, *Liahona*, *The Elders’ Journal*, provided helpful, field-tested ideas for missionaries.
 22. Ben E. Rich, *The Elders’ Reference* (New York: Eastern States Mission, 1913).
Published by Rich while serving as president of the Southern States Mission, the text contained topics such as “Avoid Contention and Debate,” “How to Baptize,” “Proper Kind of Clothing to Wear,” and “Counsel to Returning Missionaries.” Some effort was made to provide specific teaching methods under headings such as “The Key to Apostasy” and “Key to Saving Our Dead.” There was little effort to organize the topics or suggest a system for their presentation during the teaching process.

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23. Joseph F. Smith, *The Elders' Manual* (Independence, MO: Central States Mission, 1918). Published by the First Presidency, the *Manual* provided practical counsel to the missionaries under headings such as "Duty of the Senior Elder," "Personal Purity and Cleanliness," and "Photo and Articles." Topics related to teaching included "Let the Mysteries Alone," "Teach the Law of Tithing to the Saints," and "The Sacrament." Other articles focused on Church administration and the performance of ordinances.
24. For further information, see Jay E. Jensen, "The Effect of Initial Mission Field Training on Missionary Proselyting Skills" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1988), 27.
25. Robert E. Lund, "Proclaiming the Gospel in the Twentieth Century," in *Out of Obscurity: The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 229.
26. B. H. Roberts, *On Tracting* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1924).
27. Roberts, *On Tracting*, 1, 3.
28. Roberts, *On Tracting*, 11.
29. B. H. Roberts, *Why Mormonism?* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, ca. 1900).
30. James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909).
31. Charles W. Penrose, *Rays of Light* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, ca. 1900).
32. Jay E. Jensen, "Proselyting Techniques of Mormon Missionaries" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974), 21.
33. LDS tracts tended to follow the tone of other Christian tracts. Perceived as a way to influence the "passive mind of the reader," the typical Church-produced tracts had an authoritative and declarative tone. See Vasquez, "The Portable Pulpit," 89. See also Lund, "Proclaiming the Gospel in the Twentieth Century," 229, who argues that the defensive nature of the tracts reflected a response to the negative public opinion of the Church that characterized the age.
34. Charles W. Penrose, *What "Mormons" Believe*, as cited in *Elders' Journal*, September, 1904, 2–8.

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35. Ben E. Rich, *Friendly Discussion* (Kansas City, MO: Central States Mission, 1906).
36. Lund, "Proclaiming the Gospel in the Twentieth Century," 229.
37. The success of *Friendly Discussion* surprised many. Over three million copies of the pamphlet appeared in print between 1893 and 1905. Its distribution exceeded that of the Book of Mormon during this period.
38. Ben E. Rich, *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City, "That Mormon"* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1893), 1. Rich used his earlier pamphlet *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City* as the basis for his *Friendly Discussion* text.
39. LeGrand Richards, *The Message of Mormonism* (Southern States Mission, 1939). Richards designed a lesson outline that assumed one lesson a week for six months. He provided sufficient content for missionaries to teach investigators. Richards would later revise this material and publish it under the title *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976).
40. Richards, *Message of Mormonism*, 2.
41. Richards's materials also directed missionaries to begin keeping sales-like records of the people they taught. He asked them to keep an investigator record book that should "be kept neat, accurate, and up-to-date" and reminded them, "The value of this record of investigators is most significant." Richards, *Message of Mormonism*, 1.
42. Richards appeared to accept the business adage of the time, "Selling is not telling," because his systematic plan appeared to reflect the business marketing models of the time. For typical discussions that reflect the business adage "Selling is not telling," see Abhay Padgaonkar, "Telling Ain't Selling," *Business Know-How*, <http://www.businessknowhow.com/marketing/tell-sell.htm>.
43. *The Missionary Handbook* (Independence, MO: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1937).
44. The sample dialogues appear to be the work of former missionaries. The format of these dialogues varies from an actual dialogue to first-person accounts of missionary experiences.
45. Lund, "Proclaiming the Gospel in the Twentieth Century," 229.
46. *Missionary Handbook*, 79.

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47. Doyle L. Green, *Meet the Mormons: A Pictorial Introduction to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965).
48. Jensen, "Proselyting Techniques of Mormon Missionaries," 20.
49. Jensen concluded that the on-the-job training provided by senior companions (missionaries with the most experience) was the primary method of training missionaries how to tract and teach. Therefore, the lack of experienced missionaries resulted in a corresponding lack of training after World War II. See Jensen, "The Effect of Initial Mission Field Training on Missionary Proselyting Skills," 23.
50. Richard L. Anderson, interview by Janine Gallagher Doot, January 28, 2008, 2, transcript in author's possession.
51. Because Anderson served in the wartime South, those with whom he spoke were likely familiar with the Richards plan. This, in turn, provided Anderson with a starting point for the development of his own missionary teaching plan.
52. LeGrand Richards, introduction to *A Plan for Effective Missionary Work*, by Richard L. Anderson (Portland, OR: Northwestern States Mission, 1950).
53. Richards, introduction to *Plan for Effective Missionary Work*. It remains doubtful that the Anderson Plan directly created the increased growth in the Church in the Northwest. Rather, it seems more likely that sociological and economic factors created by the postwar climate contributed to this increased growth. However, it does appear that the Anderson Plan facilitated the teaching of the expanding number of investigators brought about by the postwar environment.
54. Richards, introduction to *Plan for Effective Missionary Work*.
55. Anderson, interview, 8.
56. Anderson, *Plan for Effective Missionary Work*, 3.
57. Anderson, *Plan for Effective Missionary Work*, 3.
58. Anderson, interview, 8.
59. The use of dialogue, as found in *The Missionary Handbook* and Anderson's plan, appears similar to innovations that characterized the business marketing advances early in the twentieth century. One of the first to use a standard sales dialogue was John H. Patterson, president of the National Cash Register Company (NCR), who developed the "canned sales talk." This innovative sales approach revolutionized sales in the early decades of the twentieth century as businesses

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- began to provide systematic training and support for their sales employees. The approach provided salesmen with printed product materials and prepared a dialogue for use when meeting with customers. The goal of managed sales was to train employees in understanding products and to teach them how to present their product to a potential buyer. The widespread use of the managed sales approach may have influenced those developing missionary materials. See Laura Linard, "Birth of the American Salesman," Q&A with Walter A. Friedman, in *Working Knowledge* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2004); Charles H. Fernald, *Salesmanship* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1931), 144.
60. Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 154.
 61. *A Systematic Program for Teaching the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1952). Allen observed that the *Systematic Program* was "the same plan" developed by Elder Willard A. Aston in the Great Lakes Mission. Allen did not mention Anderson and his possible influence on the development of the first set of discussions. See James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 567.
 62. *Systematic Program*, 12. The suggested missionary dialogue appears similar to the standard business sales dialogues of the time. For example, in making an appointment for teaching, the missionary would inquire, "Would it be more convenient for you in the morning or afternoon?"
 63. The positive mental attitude reflected in the material parallels the prevailing perspective of many of the self-help business books published in the years prior to the *Systematic Program*. Typical of the self-help genre were Napoleon Hill's influential 1937 work *Think and Grow Rich* (Aukland: Floating Press, 1937) and the work of W. Clement Stone, who made popular the phrase "positive mental attitude." See Forrest Wallace Cato, "The Last Interview with Industry Legend: W. Clement Stone," *Register*, August 2006, 3–5.
 64. *Systematic Program*, 19–20.
 65. *Systematic Program*, 22–24.
 66. *Systematic Program*, 34–36.
 67. *Systematic Program*, 33.

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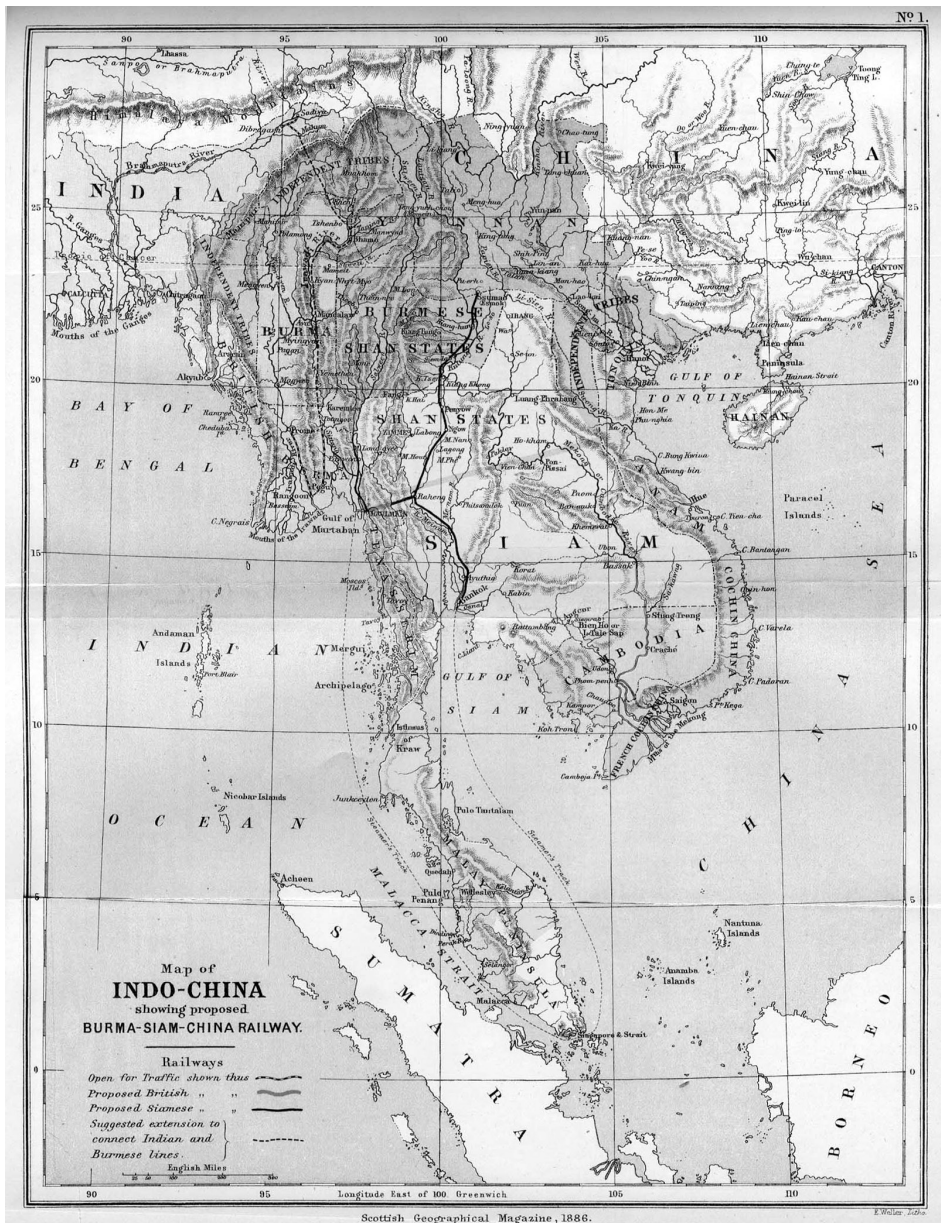
68. *Systematic Program*, 22.
69. Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 567–68.
70. Allen suggests that because the *Systematic Program* was not mandated, missions continued to develop their own plans independent of the Church. Because of a desire to standardize the training of missionaries, the Missionary Department created a new uniform plan for all missions. See Allen and Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 568.
71. *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961).
72. See R. Lanier Britsch, “Missions and Missionary Work,” in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 764.
73. More than any previous plan, this new approach paralleled the standard dialogue first promoted as a business marketing technique. This method assumed that a standard sales dialogue was important in approaching a customer, propositioning them, teaching or demonstrating product advantages, and closing with a challenge to purchase. The dialogue also provided narrative designed to overcome objections and redirect concerns. See Walter A. Friedman, “John H. Patterson and the Sales Strategy of the National Cash Register Company, 1884 to 1922,” *Working Knowledge* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1999).
74. Garr, Cannon, and Cowan, *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, 764.
75. *Uniform System*, 3.
76. Peter Rawlins, interview by Dennis A. Wright and Janine Gallagher Doot, December 4, 2007.
77. It may be a coincidence that the investigator in Ben E. Rich’s *Friendly Discussions* was also Mr. Brown.
78. Rawlins, interview.
79. This perspective is that of the author, who served in the England East Mission from 1968 to 1970.
80. For such a comparison, see James-Charles Duffy, “The New Missionary Discussions and the Future of Correlation,” *Sunstone*, September 2005, 28–46.

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81. For the purpose of illustration, a brief examination of the plan of salvation discussion reveals representative similarities and differences. Both plans begin with a review discussion of the previous lesson and the related investigator commitments, followed by an introduction to the doctrine of premortal life, beginning with Moses 3:5. In comparing the actual dialogues, the *Systematic Program* narrative appears less precise because the *Uniform System* dialogue prompts the missionary to summarize in succinct sentences and pose leading questions. As the lesson continues, the *Systematic Program* introduces the role of Lucifer in mortal probation, while the *Uniform System* makes no mention of Lucifer but does teach that mortality is a test. Both lessons then explain the doctrine of the spirit world and the doctrine of vicarious temple ordinances. The final section of each lesson focuses on the three degrees of glory, with the *Uniform System* providing over two pages of dialogue, compared to a single page in the other plan. In summary, the *Uniform System* builds on the concept that humans come from the presence of their Father in Heaven and that through obedience and resurrection, they can return to live with him.
82. The commitment dialogue parallels that used in the business sales industry. It is not known how these practices influenced those who were developing the missionary teaching plans.
83. *Uniform System*, 72.
84. Jensen, "Effect of Initial Mission Field Training," 24. Church tracts at this time reflected modern graphics and design. This populist style increased the tracts' usefulness with investigators.
85. As with previous missionary efforts, Church practices appeared to parallel successful business practices to facilitate the finding and teaching process. Nowhere is this practice more evident than in the use of the "religious survey." Building on the common practice of using surveys to attract and influence potential customers, mission leaders created surveys of their own to interest people in the Church. For example, in one approach, missionaries would ask those they met to assist them with a survey. This proved to be an effective way to engage contacts in a gospel discussion.

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86. One example of adapting media for missionary teaching came from the Church's experience in the 1964–65 World's Fair held in New York City. Building upon the success of the film *Man's Search for Happiness*, the Church produced a filmstrip version with an accompanying tape recording, which missionaries quickly adopted as part of their introduction to the Church.
87. George T. Taylor, "Effects of Coaching on the Development of Proselyting Skills Used by the Missionary Training Center, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Provo, Utah, 1986" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 1987), 20.



Elam Luddington's mission to the Far East in many ways represents his life's ministry. B. H. Roberts opined that there was "nothing more heroic in our annals than the labors and sufferings of these brethren of the mission to India."⁷⁸ Map of Indo-China showing the proposed Burma-Siam-China railway, 1886. Courtesy of Hugh A. Webster and Arthur Silva White.