

Chapter 5

Sharing the Gospel in a Global Setting

Elder Lance B. Wickman

COME AND SEE” (John 1:39). This gentle admonition of the Savior was uttered to two of John the Baptist’s disciples. They had heard the Baptist declare that Jesus was the Lamb of God, indeed the very Son of God. “And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwelleth thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. . . . One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:37–41).

“Come and see.” These words of soft invitation have a profound significance for the missionary work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, they are the very lodestar of that work. They have dual significance. They were spoken by the Savior Himself, raising the curtain on the great work of bringing souls to Christ. This work began in the meridian of time and continues with an unparalleled scope and dynamism in these present and last days.

“Come and see.” The words also capture the tone of that work. John and Andrew had found truth in the teachings of John the Baptist. But then came a mightier one, even Jesus of Nazareth. He did

not belittle the truth they had already received. He only invited them to receive more, even a fulness of truth. “Come and see.” Touched in their hearts as well as in their minds by His doctrines, their previous understanding was added upon, enabling them to declare to others, “We have found the Messiah, which is . . . the Christ.” And so it is today. Messengers of truth go forth from within the shadows of these hills to the very corners of the earth. They seek not to tear down but to build up; not to obscure truth but to sharpen it, to focus it, to add to it. And they do so not by strident argumentation, contention, or coercion but with a gentle beckoning—the same employed by the Master Himself so many centuries ago—“Come and see.”

The Law and Religion Project is an endeavor of Emory University School of Law in Atlanta, Georgia. As its name suggests, this endeavor seeks to explore the interaction between religion and the religious on the one hand, and the operations of law and government on the other hand. Every few years, Emory University publishes a volume with the results of its research, relying heavily on contributions of legal scholars and religious clerics in a host of faiths and denominations. The readership for these books is largely government officials charged with responsibility for overseeing and regulating religious activity in their various nations and those in the academic and intellectual community that surround the government. These volumes have proven to have an important effect in the development of the law respecting religion in many nations.

Encouraging the development of principles of righteous government and religious liberty in every land is of prime importance to the Church. Indeed, the Lord has repeatedly so stated in modern revelation. In Doctrine and Covenants 44:3–5, He has said: “And it shall come to pass that they [the elders of the Church] shall go forth into the regions round about, and preach repentance unto the people. And many shall be converted, insomuch that *ye shall obtain power to organize yourselves according to the laws of man; that your enemies may not have power over you; that you may be preserved in all things; that you may be enabled to keep my laws; that every bond*

may be broken wherewith the enemy seeketh to destroy my people” (emphasis added).

And not just any government: “And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is my will that my people should observe to do all things whatsoever I command them. *And that law of the land which is constitutional, supporting that principle of freedom in maintaining rights and privileges, belongs to all mankind, and is justifiable before me.* Therefore, I, the Lord, justify you, and your brethren of my church, in befriending that law which is the constitutional law of the land; and as pertaining to law of man, whatsoever is more or less than this, cometh of evil” (D&C 98:4–6; emphasis added).

And so it was that some two and one-half years ago, Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was interested when he was invited by Emory University to author a chapter on a forthcoming book about the challenges of religious proselytism in today’s world. The First Presidency approved the project. He then invited me to assist him. Working together over a period of months, we produced a lengthy article, which we entitled “The Missionary Work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”¹

We believe that in some respects this article is a unique piece—not in its doctrine, but in its scope. It explores every aspect of the missionary activity of the Church, from the underlying revelations and doctrine that motivate Latter-day Saints to proclaim the gospel “among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (D&C 112:1), to the missionary culture of the Church, which begins with Primary songs like “I Hope They Call Me on a Mission,” to the manner of calls of missionaries and mission presidents, to the *modus operandi*

1. Dallin H. Oaks and Lance B. Wickman, “The Missionary Work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” in *Sharing the Book: Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism*, ed. John Witte Jr. and Richard C. Martin (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 247–75.

of missions, and to the collateral humanitarian and welfare activities of the Church.

The article then proceeds from an explication of these internal doctrines and programs of the Church to a discussion of what governments and the Church have a right to expect from one another. And therein, of course, is where the proverbial rubber meets the road in today's world. This is the issue that Emory University seeks to explore. This is the issue that is of critical importance to the Church as it moves forward under its divine mandate to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

It is my desire to attempt at least to touch on the vast dimensions of the "widescreen" magnificence and power of the missionary activity of the Church. For Latter-day Saints, proclaiming the gospel is more than a program. It is more even than just a teaching or doctrine of the Church. *Sharing the gospel is who and what we are as a people!* It is woven into the very fabric of our lives. Saith the Lord, "It becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor" (D&C 88:81). That mandate is the warp and woof of our lives.

Hence, it is vital that governments understand this reality. Attempts to regulate or restrict the preaching of the gospel by member missionaries is not just a limitation upon some auxiliary activity of Latter-day Saints. It is a material infringement on our religious freedom. And we are not the only Christian denomination for whom witnessing of Jesus Christ is a vital doctrine and activity. The legal scholars at Emory University have expressed concern about the implications of this basic fact. These scholars have wondered whether there is a tension between the fundamental Christian notion of community—namely, loving one's neighbor as oneself—and this great commission to witness. This is more than an academic inquiry. It has important philosophical ramifications for the laws adopted by nations. If the basic purpose of law is to ensure a peaceful community, then might it be asked, are the demands of religious freedom antithetical to that purpose?

Happily, our article declares that they are not. Indeed, the central teaching of the article is that for Latter-day Saints there is no tension between the Golden Rule and the so-called Great Commission. *To the contrary, we share the gospel because we want to be good neighbors!* But all is premised on the Savior's gentle invitation, "Come and see." Unfortunately, as virtually each day's newspaper reflects, that moderate entreaty is easily drowned in the powerful political currents and cross-currents of contemporary society.

On the positive side, there is no question that in the last decade particularly there has been an ascendancy of principles of religious freedom codified in the law of many lands that is nothing short of breathtaking, even miraculous. Where just a decade ago the Soviet empire stood implacably in the way of religious freedom across a wide expanse of Europe and Asia, there are now a host of fledgling democracies and nearly a dozen missions of the Church with thousands of members. Temples have even been announced. I remember as a stake president in California in the mid-1980s teasing prospective missionaries about recommending them for Siberia. Such teasing has been rendered obsolete by these dramatic events. We now have missionaries in Siberia!

And the progress is not limited to Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout Asia and Africa, nation after nation has liberalized its laws and opened its doors to the missionaries of the Church. I attended the Summer 1999 graduation ceremonies for BYU's College of Humanities. Dean Van Gessel shared with the graduates some remarkable statistics reflecting BYU's preeminence in conferring degrees in a host of languages. I could not help but think of the missionaries represented in the graduating classes at the Y and that this statistic is merely a reflection of this marvelous phenomenon—predicted by prophets ancient and modern—of the gospel going to every nation, kindred, and tongue.

But sadly all is not positive. There are forces at work that challenge our efforts to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the world. Some of these forces stem from excesses and atrocities perpetrated in the

name of religion. One need only mention places such as Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent to have instant recall of ongoing conflict and tragedy rooted in religious differences. Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University has referred to these places as “fault lines.”² These fault lines separate Catholics from Protestants, Christians from Muslims, and Muslims from Hindus. Commenting on Dr. Huntington’s phrasing, another noted scholar, Paul Marshall, has stated:

[The] chronic armed conflict is concentrated on the margins of the traditional religions, especially along the boundaries of the Islamic world. The Middle East, the southern Sahara, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Southern Asia are where Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism intersect. It is also where most wars have broken out in the last fifty years.

These are not explicitly religious wars. But since religion shapes cultures, people in these regions have different histories and different views of human life. Regardless of the triggers for conflict, they are living in unstable areas where conflict is likely to occur—in religious fault zones that are prone to political earthquakes.³

To fulfill the Lord’s mandate, the gospel must be preached in every nation—even those where there is conflict. Moreover, such conflicts also have a way of spilling over into other places. The specter of international terrorism—much of it in the name of religion—is a concern of government in every nation. As a consequence, many governments are engaged in the process of studying and classifying religions, seeking to determine those that are acceptable to the government and those that are disfavored.

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2. Samuel P. Huntington, “Civilizations at Odds,” *At Century’s End: Great Minds Reflect on Our Times*, ed. Nathan P. Gardels (La Jolla, CA: ALTI Publishing, 1995), 59–67.
 3. Paul Marshall, “Keeping the Faith: Religion, Freedom, and International Affairs,” *Imprimis* 28, no. 3 (March 1999): 3.

The challenge presented by this international cauldron is further exacerbated by what Marshall refers to as a “secular myopia” that afflicts many government officials, policy makers, and the intellectual community that surrounds them. He describes this myopia as “an introverted, parochial inability even to see, much less understand, the role of religion in human life.”⁴

Indeed, in Western nations particularly, “opinion makers and policy makers consider themselves the heirs of the ‘Enlightenment.’ . . . To them, all contemporary peoples, events, and issues fall into Enlightenment categories, which are most often political or ideological. . . . If what believers believe does not easily fall into an Enlightenment category, then it is assumed that they must be ‘irrational.’ Thus, [the term] ‘fundamentalist’ is now merely shorthand for ‘religious fanatic’—for someone who is to be categorized rather than heard, observed rather than comprehended, dismissed rather than respected.”⁵

As if these weren’t complications enough, in many nations there are entrenched interests, usually a dominant or a state religion, which views with hostility the encroachments in terms of converts made by other sects and denominations on what these interests view as their own private preserve. Often these established religions seek to use their influence with government officials and rule makers to impede, if not to block altogether, inroads by the newcomers.

It is important to realize that fundamentally these phenomena are not targeted against Latter-day Saints. These are political and cultural circumstances that exist quite independently of the Church and its missionary endeavors. But with a missionary force of approximately sixty thousand young men and women serving in some 125 nations, the Church inevitably is bound to encounter legal and political predicaments created by these phenomena. As a result,

4. Marshall, “Keeping the Faith,” 2.

5. Marshall, “Keeping the Faith,” 3.

the Church is constantly at work to foster warm and cordial relationships with the agents and institutions of government.

All these efforts are forged on the anvil of the one central premise of Church missionary activity: the “come and see” principle. That principle is itself a reflection of one of the most fundamental of all Church doctrines—moral agency—a profound respect for the right of each individual to hear and to decide for himself. The Emory University article contains a section devoted to this doctrinal principle. To quote just an excerpt: “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 . . . 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*.”⁶

Hence, the message of the restored gospel is basically one of *choice*. Such a message cannot be proclaimed in any other way than that which allows such choice to operate. This is the very essence of the expression “come and see.” No hard sell, the gospel presented by the missionaries is a stunning display of eternal truths that glitter in their own right. These truths testify of themselves; our task is but to unveil them in an atmosphere that enables the investigator to accept or reject them at will. Hence, for Latter-day Saints there really is no tension between the Golden Rule and the Great Commission. Because we love our neighbor, we offer to share what we have, but we do so out of complete respect for his right to refuse to listen, much less embrace.

Our proclamations are no threat to the peace and tranquillity of the state. Indeed, embracing the gospel makes a person a better citizen. We believe that wise governments present no official impediments to Church representatives. To do otherwise, we believe, takes

6. Oaks and Wickman, “Missionary Work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” 251; emphasis added.

government beyond its rightful sphere. What follows is taken from the actual text of the article:

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”. 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. . . .

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. 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 heartrending. 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 500 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. . . .

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 between 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 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) 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. . . .

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 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 so-called 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 elec-

tronically. 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 publicly declare beliefs.* 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 non-members. 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. . . .

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 goodwill 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, goodwill, 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.”⁷

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Elder Lance B. Wickman is a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. This essay was presented at “The Challenge of Sharing Religious Beliefs in a Global Setting,” the International Society’s tenth annual conference, August 1999, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

7. Oaks and Wickman, “Missionary Work of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” 268–75.