

THE CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Public Perceptions and the “Man with the Stamp”

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Elder Lance B. Wickman, then a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presented this essay at “Meet the Mormons: Public Perception and the Global Church,” at the International Society’s nineteenth annual conference, April 2008, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

The story is told of the man who survived the Johnstown (Pennsylvania) Flood of 1889, which led to the death of more than twenty-two hundred people. All the remainder of his days, he never missed an opportunity to recount his experience. Eventually, he passed on. Upon his arrival at the pearly gates, Saint Peter asked him whether he had any special requests; the man responded that he did. “I would like to tell everyone about my experience in surviving the Johnstown flood,” he said. “Well,” said Peter, “that’s a little unusual, but I think it can be arranged.” After a few days, Saint Peter approached the man and said, “We have everyone assembled now to hear your account of surviving the Johnstown flood, but there is one thing that you should know.” “What’s that?” said the man. “Well,” said Peter, “Noah is in the audience!”

I feel a little like the man who survived the Johnstown Flood as I look into the faces of this audience. I recognize numbers of you whose vocations

or avocations have been in international affairs. Some of you have served in the diplomatic service. Others have worked or studied abroad as businesspeople, teachers, or students. Many of you have served in the Church in other lands. I have not done any of those things; so in one sense, those of you who have done these things seem much like “Noah” from my vantage point. However, I do have a perspective to offer in my capacity as Church general counsel and as one who has the opportunity to observe the First Presidency and their associates at close range as they address international issues confronting the Church. Perhaps from that vantage point, if from no other, I have some observations that may be of interest to you.

The topic for this year’s conference of the International Society is “Meet the Mormons: Public Perception and the Global Church.” In an effort to say something relevant to that topic, I have titled these remarks “The Church in the Twenty-First Century: Public Perceptions and the ‘Man with the Stamp.’”

We are a Church that believes in law. Two of the Articles of Faith give expression to our belief. Doctrine and Covenants section 134 is a more expansive declaration of our belief in law and the obligations that a church and civil government owe to one another.¹ This is necessarily so because the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth has much to do with the law of human kind.

TWO CHURCHES

Doctrine and Covenants section 1 is a dramatic pronouncement, dating from the earliest days of the Church, of the worldwide character of the gospel message. Among other things, it states, “That the fulness of [the] gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.”² Doctrine and Covenants section 44 is even more specific in stating the close connection that necessarily exists between secular law and the establishment of the Church: “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.”³ In other words, the Lord promises

that the elders of the Church would be given power to organize the Church “according to the laws of man” so that the Lord’s people would be able to live His laws. Coupled with the mandate to carry the gospel to every quarter of the earth, it is quite obvious that the Lord has contemplated since the beginning of this dispensation that the Church would need to establish itself legally in every nation, legal system, and jurisdiction.

Some fifteen years ago, Dr. Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University opined that there was a coming “clash of civilizations” between the East and West.⁴ Some, at the time, downplayed his statement or severely criticized it. However, 9/11 and events subsequent to it have validated the fact that there is indeed a “clash of civilizations” that is occurring, particularly between the Western industrialized nations and the less-economically advantaged peoples girding portions of the midsection of the planet in various countries, historically referred to as “the East.”

Whatever merits Dr. Huntington’s statement may have as it pertains to the nations, the phrase “clash of civilizations” has a profound meaning as it relates to the challenges confronting the kingdom of God as it seeks to establish itself. In the Book of Mormon, in response to his prayerful request to see the vision his father had seen, Nephi was actually permitted to see even more. As he gazed in vision down through the stream of time, he saw that in our day there would be two fundamental organizations, or sources of power. These he referred to as “churches.”⁵ The first, and the significantly smaller of the two, was the “Church of the Lamb,” or the kingdom of God. The other he referred to as the “great and abominable church,” referring to the influence of the world. These two would be in opposition to one another and would remain so until the Second Coming and the advent of the Millennium.⁶

There are many applications to be seen around us of this metaphor of the two churches. At one level, each of us experiences this “clash” in our individual lives and the lives of those closest to us. But at another level, a geopolitical level, we can see it manifest in the Church’s efforts to establish itself among the nations. It is against this backdrop of the clash between the gospel “civilization” and the materialistic or worldly “civilization” that the dynamics of the Church’s efforts to “organize [itself] according to the laws of man” occur.

LEGAL RECOGNITION AND THE MAN WITH THE STAMP

We use a more convenient phrase than “organize according to the laws of man” in our everyday parlance. We speak of obtaining “legal recognition” for the Church. Those of us who have grown up in the United States, or in one of a handful of other countries with a strong civil-liberties tradition, tend to take for granted the so-called rule of law. We believe in such concepts as “blind justice” and that “no individual is above the law.” We may take for granted that everyone else in the world accepts those same concepts. While I believe it is true that good people everywhere, regardless of culture or legal system, naturally believe in the notion of fundamental fairness, it also must be said that not every legal system treats these basic ideals of American justice with the same honor and dignity. Indeed, in many parts of the world, despite what law may be written on the books, the “real law” or source of authority resides with the official whose duty it is to enforce it. Stated differently, the law is not so much what is written as it is what some official declares it to be. Thus, we have what could be referred to as the “rule of man” rather than the rule of law.

This is what I am referring to in using that phrase, “the man with the stamp.” In many places, in order for the Church to establish itself, to obtain legal recognition, the Church must gain the approval of the public official who is the *de facto* voice of the law—the man with the stamp. But what is meant by that term “legal recognition”?

As a practical matter, being legally recognized in a country is not an either-or proposition; rather, *it is a spectrum of shadings*. Think of it in terms of the various functions and activities of the Church. For the Church to be “recognized”—to be fully established—the members need to be free to meet, real estate for meetinghouses and temples must be obtained, missionaries must be permitted to enter the country and to proclaim the gospel message, we must be free to print and distribute our literature, we must be free to open and maintain bank accounts, members must be free to pay their tithing, and so forth. To the extent that any of these is legally unavailable, the Church is not established. To that extent it is not “recognized.” To that extent, in a very real sense, we don’t have a Church. To restate the matter in a more positive way, to the extent that those various

functions and manifestations of Church activity are available in a particular nation, we can say that the Church is, to that extent, legally recognized.

There's really an evolution in status leading to full legal recognition. Almost always, the first phase of recognition is *registration*. By that I mean that a legal entity constituting "the Church" in the eyes of the government has been organized and registered as required by law. In most cases, this is by far the easiest phase. Registration usually involves retaining a lawyer and then completing and filing the necessary forms. Though simple, it is also essential. We tend to think of "the Church" as this ecclesiastical association led by prophets and apostles and stake presidents and bishops. But virtually all governments look to the legal entity, the "secular church" organized under their laws, as the identifiable church. Respecting the secular Church while serving in the ecclesiastical Church is a principle that Church leaders and members in a country must always remember.

The next phase of legal recognition might be referred to as *credibility*. What do I mean by that? For one thing, I mean that the Church always must be defined on the right side of what could be called the "cult line." Concerning terrorism, much of it in the name of religion, many nations are classifying religious organizations. As a minimum, we must seek to befriend the rule makers and to persuade them that the Church is a responsible and pacific organization. Government officials must see that Church teachings are conducive to public order. Credibility is the gateway through which the Church must pass in order to preach the gospel with vigor in any nation. Without credibility, we can go nowhere.

The ultimate phase of legal recognition I refer to as *respectability*. This is shorthand for a broad array of factors measuring the extent to which the Church's bona fides have been recognized by the institutions and representatives of government. The extent of the Church's respectability in the eyes of government is usually manifest in the extent of the legal approvals it has received, such as the number of missionary visas authorized; the ease in obtaining visas; and the facility with which meetinghouse properties, including temple sites, are purchased and qualified for construction. Ultimately, the degree of the influence—or more to the point, the lack thereof—that a dominant religious faith in the particular country has on impeding Church growth or operations is a key bellwether of respectability.

The less there is of such adverse influence, the greater is the evidence of the respectability enjoyed by the Church.

Each of these phases, especially credibility and respectability, depend on the quality of our relationships with the “man with the stamp.” Developing these friendships is not simply a matter for lawyers representing the Church. To the contrary, developing cordial relationships with government representatives is a “team sport” for the Church. It begins with the President of the Church himself, who, as President Hinckley so exemplified, is his own “Secretary of State.” As the President of the Church, his counselors, and members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles travel across the earth, they frequently meet with senior government officials, often the presidents of nations. Area presidencies and senior temporal-affairs staff members also play an important role in developing and nurturing cordial government relationships. And, of course, public affairs directors and area legal counsel perhaps are the most continually engaged in developing positive government relations with public officials.

Even Latter-day Saints traveling internationally in their private capacity play an important role. Some of these deserve to be singled out. I realize that in doing so I risk leaving out mention of others who have made important contributions to the legal recognition of the Church. To any such here present, I apologize in advance.

No address concerning the nurturing of a positive, public perception of the Church with government officials would be complete without making reference to our beloved friend, Professor Cole Durham. Perhaps more than any other “private citizen” of the Church, Cole has had a profound influence in advancing the principles of credibility and respectability for the Church and in helping to develop political institutions in a host of countries that are friendly and welcoming to new faiths. His annual symposium on international law and religion, held here at BYU each October, culminating in a luncheon at Church headquarters for the attendees, is certainly one of the most important diplomatic outreach efforts made by the Church or its representatives each year.

Also worthy of special mention is Judge J. Clifford Wallace, a senior judge on the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Cliff Wallace has traveled widely across the earth, mingling with jurists and ministers of justice in

many lands. Cliff sees many opportunities to mention his Mormon faith, and like Cole, he has been instrumental in helping the Church develop friendships with men and women of consequence in various nations.

All of these—General Authorities, other Church representatives, and Latter-day Saint private citizens—combine their respective efforts in cultivating a positive, public image of the Church with government officials and other opinion leaders that play a critical role in helping the Church to optimize its legal recognition in many countries.

CHALLENGES

I return now, however, to the circumstance in which the Church is compelled to function in this telestial sphere. I refer again to the ongoing “clash” between the two “civilizations” of the Church and the world at large. We face a number of challenges that sometimes hamper the development of strong relationships with government officials. What follows is a brief catalog of just some of the more significant categories of such challenges.

The “Cult Line”

As mentioned, many governments are concerned about the potentially subversive influence of some religious movements. Accordingly, they attempt to identify and then classify those they deem to be “cults.” Once a faith group is classified as a cult, its prospects of obtaining credibility, much less respectability, are nil. This is a phenomenon that is particularly prevalent in Western Europe. There are probably a number of factors, both historical and political, that explain the prevalence of this challenge in Western Europe. The increasing size and influence of Muslim populations among the native peoples of Western Europe is likely among them.

Opposition from Dominant Religious Traditions

This phenomenon is certainly not new. It existed anciently, to a profound degree, during the mortal life and public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and continued in opposition to the Church he established. It has been an influence since the earliest days of the Restoration. In the modern world, however, it is not necessarily focused against our Church alone. In

countries as widely separated as Latin America, Asia, and Russia, dominant faith traditions have reacted reflexively to the perceived invasion of other faith groups, including our church. Often, these traditionally dominant sects have considerable influence in the corridors of government and can pose difficulties.

Communist or Former Communist Nations

Communism and faith traditions have never existed comfortably side by side. Indeed, in the Soviet Union and Communist China, some faiths survived only by significantly diluting their religious practices and dramatically lowering their public profile. While, thankfully, the world has moved on from the hostility of the Cold War days, there are still vestiges of this antipathy.

Other Leftist Governments

Particularly in Latin America, the fairly recent emergence of some leftist governments has created relationship difficulties for the Church. Sometimes these relationship difficulties stem from a misperception on the part of government officials that the Church is an “American” institution and that somehow our missionaries and other representatives are “double agents,” representatives of the US government as well as the Church.

Government Religious Regulatory Schemes

Sometimes the challenge comes in the form of awkward government regulations that are difficult for the Church to comply with. For example, in Spain some years ago, the government adopted laws requiring the Religious Affairs Office of the Ministry of Justice to enter into concordats—“treaties”—with broad classes of religious traditions. Accordingly, the government entered into concordats with the Roman Catholic Church, Judaism, Islam, and the Protestant sects. Obviously, none of these categories apply to the Church. Initially, the government urged the Church to simply affiliate with the Protestants to take advantage of their concordat. But that was not a good fit from our standpoint, and the Protestants didn’t want us anyway! Finally, the government concluded that the Church was entitled to *notario arraigo* status, meaning that the government had

determined that the Church was “well established” and thus entitled to its own concordat. Negotiations for such an agreement were progressing well when the infamous Madrid train bombings occurred in March 2004, which resulted in a Socialist government elected to power in Spain. This new government, although friendly, decided to revisit all of the concordats, and our efforts to obtain a concordat of our own have been stymied.

SUCCESSSES

Fortunately, however, notwithstanding the challenges, we continue to make progress. Time allows us to refer to only four experiences. Even in these cases, when measured against the registration/credibility/respectability scale, the extent of legal recognition enjoyed by the Church in these respective countries is in its infancy. In three of the four, as will be apparent, the “credibility” phase of legal recognition has necessarily preceded the registration phase; and in two of the four, registration is still not complete. But each case represents significant progress in what would otherwise be seen as potentially adverse circumstances. Each of these may be seen as resulting from the development over time of a positive perception among government officials through the efforts of many Church representatives.

Slovakia

I begin with Slovakia. Most here will remember the *Church News* article in fall 2006 announcing the miraculous petition drive over the course of less than a week wherein some sixty missionaries from the Czech Prague Mission collected more than thirty thousand signatures of Slovakian citizens willing to endorse the registration application for the Church to establish itself in Slovakia. Only twenty thousand signatures were necessary to satisfy the registration requirement. A short time later, Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve was on hand to actually receive the certificate of registration on behalf of the Church. These circumstances were indeed miraculous; but I like to think of them as the “second miracle” associated with the Slovakian registration.

The “first miracle”—and in some respects the more significant miracle—had its roots years earlier in some friendships made by none

other than Cole Durham. In 1990–91, in the course of his seemingly numberless trips to Eastern Europe, Cole had met two Czechoslovakian officials. He invited them to his symposium, which in those days was a small, informal “bag lunch” affair. Cole introduced them to Elders Dallin H. Oaks and Dennis B. Neuenschwander. These officials introduced Cole to some of their associates. And one of these introduced Cole to Dr. Jan Juran, who in due course became the director of Church Affairs in the Ministry of Culture in Slovakia. The relationship with Dr. Juran was materially enhanced by Elizabeth Sewell, a BYU law student and later assistant to Cole, who speaks fluent Czech and had significant opportunities as a legal extern to discuss the Church and its registration problem with Dr. Juran. He then attended the symposium, visited Church headquarters, and was favorably impressed by what he saw.

Now comes the miracle: The Church has had a small presence of a few hundred members in Slovakia. The Slovakian Parliament had enacted a statute providing the path to legal registration for religious associations. In part, it provides that churches seeking registration must submit “a registration proposal . . . presenting proof that the number of its adult *followers* having their permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic is at least twenty thousand persons” (emphasis added). But what was meant by that word “followers”? Did it mean “adherents” or “members,” or did it simply mean “endorsers” or “supporters”?

The interpretive decision was within the jurisdiction of Dr. Juran. And he decided that the more liberal interpretation of mere endorsement or acknowledgment by any Slovakian citizens would satisfy the registration requirement. This set the stage for the collection of signatures by the missionaries. That they garnered more than 150 percent of what was required over the course of just a few days was, indeed, miraculous. But the quieter, even more fundamental, miracle had occurred in the nurturing of a genuine friendship with a good man, who became the “man with the stamp.”

China

Next, I turn to China. The history of the Church in the People’s Republic of China has yet to be written; it is very much in its infancy. That we have

come as far as we have there is a tribute to the positive contributions of many Latter-day Saints, whose goodness, decency, and integrity have, over a significant period of time, persuaded Chinese officials that the Church may be trusted to keep its word and to honor, obey, and sustain the law.⁷ I know that numbers of you here present have been among those who have made a contribution. It is impossible to give adequate “screen credits” to all, but I will list just a few: BYU folk dancers and English teachers; the Polynesian Cultural Center in Laie, Hawaii; Apostles Neal A. Maxwell, Russell M. Nelson, and Dallin H. Oaks; Elder Donald L. Staheli, the former CEO of Continental Grain Company; Area Seventy Chu-Jen Chia; expatriate “China hands”; and numerous Chinese citizens who have found and embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ while studying abroad and then returned home. The positive influence of these prompted a delegation of the PRC’s State Administration of Religious Affairs (or SARA) several years ago to visit Church headquarters and Latter-day Saint congregations in various parts of the United States. The net effect of all this has been the development of a positive perception of the Church in key circles of the government. China is very much a country where credibility must precede registration.

And we are not yet registered, but we do have tacit government approval to conduct limited Church operations. Expatriate branches have held services and activities in the PRC for years with the approval of the government. However, it has been more difficult to obtain permission for Chinese nationals who are Church members to meet. But within the past few years a number of branches of native Chinese have been established. These “native” branches must remain separate in all respects from the expat branches. There can be no joint activities or meetings, no commingling of funds, etc. There is no proselyting. Only relatives of native members can be baptized in China. But we are meeting! And the Church is growing! Indeed, it is possible that when the history of the Church in China is eventually written, it will be shown that it grew from the inside out!

“Andalasia”

I turn now to a country that, due to the sensitivity of the situation, I shall not identify by name. I shall simply refer to it as “Andalasia”—a name

that some here may recognize from the recent Disney film *Enchanted*. The Church is legally registered in Andalusia. We have numbers of congregations. Our members enjoy relative freedom to conduct meetings and activities. Within limits, proselyting is permitted, and we do have full-time missionaries, including foreign missionaries, serving there.

The problem in Andalusia has been in obtaining sufficient visas for foreign missionaries. The government previously has permitted only a small handful, which has significantly hampered efforts to grow the Church there. Then, a newly appointed ambassador to the United States from that country happened to visit Salt Lake City. It was just one of numerous visits the ambassador was making to various cities and regions in the United States on behalf of his government. While in Salt Lake, he met with the First Presidency and with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. When he returned to Washington, DC, he became acquainted with Elder Ralph Hardy (an Area Seventy), the chairman of the Church Public Affairs Advisory Council there, and an LDS senator. He was very impressed by those whom he met and what he observed about the Church.

So, when he was advised of the difficulty the Church was having in obtaining missionary visas, he offered to personally issue whatever visas we needed. And that is what he has done and is doing. Now, that said, we at Church headquarters have tried to be modest in what we request so as not to take advantage of the generosity of this good man. But I can tell you that the number of visas for our missionaries has substantially increased as a result.

Vietnam

Finally, I come to a country that has deep personal significance to me. I speak of Vietnam. In past general conference remarks, I have made reference to my return to Vietnam after an absence of some forty years.⁸ With my wife, Pat, I revisited the top floor of the Caravelle Hotel, among other places, in Saigon. It was there, on 31 October 1966, that then-Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Quorum of the Twelve dedicated Vietnam to the preaching of the gospel. I was present on that occasion. The circumstances of my being in attendance at that meeting were themselves extraordinary. I was an infantry officer. Our battalion was in the jungles and rice paddies

in combat operations. Somehow I had learned of this upcoming meeting. There were three of us in our battalion who were Church members, and I was the senior in rank. So I went to the battalion commander and asked if we could be excused from combat operations for twenty-four hours to attend that meeting. I was actually surprised when he gave his consent.

We arrived as the meeting was about to begin. It was a wonderful meeting! There were about two hundred present, mostly servicemen, Army nurses, and Red Cross workers. But there were a few Vietnamese members present. Elder Hinckley was the final speaker. He gave a marvelous address. When he finished, he told us that before he left Salt Lake City he had visited with President David O. McKay. President McKay authorized him to dedicate that country to the preaching of the gospel if he felt so inclined. "I feel so inclined," he said. While we in our khaki and olive drab uniforms bowed our heads, this servant of the Lord offered a profoundly beautiful prayer of dedication. It was a Pentecostal experience! The Spirit of the Lord filled the room. It was truly one of the great spiritual experiences of my life.

In the intervening years, as I have visited in small congregations of Vietnamese members in the United States, I have remembered that prayer and looked forward to the fulfillment of the promises in it. And we are beginning to see them!

Some Vietnamese members have returned to Vietnam. General Authorities and Church legal counsel have visited the country. With the aid of counsel retained in Ho Chi Minh City, some members baptized decades ago have been found. As the country has opened to commerce, Latter-day Saint expatriates have come there to live. Small gatherings of Church members have begun to meet. Contact has been established with key government officials affiliated with the state Committee on Religious Affairs. Some of these government officials have accepted the invitation to attend the annual International Law and Religion Symposium at the J. Reuben Clark Law School and have attended a session of general conference. Some have sat at lunch with President Gordon B. Hinckley.

The result? The Church is now registered to hold meetings at specific locations in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. There are about one thousand members in Vietnam, most of them Vietnamese, and the larger portion of

them in Ho Chi Minh City. Although we do not have missionaries serving there yet and do no active proselyting, we are permitted to teach and baptize investigators who come to our approved meeting locations. And the Church is growing in Vietnam! We have missionaries from Vietnam serving in other countries, including the United States.

Our current effort is to obtain national registration. And our members are not yet allowed to pay tithing, so government approval is needed for that vital activity. But my point today is that the government officials with whom we are dealing are friendly to us as a result of the efforts of Church members and officers—Vietnamese as well as from elsewhere. Vietnam is another country where our credibility is leading the way to registration instead of the more traditional pattern of achieving registration first. It is just a matter of time until registration is accomplished. Then, I believe respectability will clearly be on the horizon, and the Church will be on its way toward full legal recognition.

I do not suggest that all this will happen tomorrow, or even next year. Patience is a virtue that is absolutely essential in every country as we move through the phases of registration, credibility, and respectability toward the ultimate goal of legal recognition. Particularly among the lands and nations of Asia is this the case. Kipling’s famous line about the folly of trying to “hustle the East” certainly comes to mind.⁹ But echoing in our ears are the Lord’s own words in that very first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, “That the fulness of [the] gospel [will] be proclaimed . . . unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.”¹⁰ And warming my heart are the recollections of an October day forty-two years ago when an Apostle of the Lord prophesied as much with respect to the land and the peoples of Vietnam.

THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT

There are literally countless evidences that the Lord’s hand is in this matter of obtaining legal recognition for the Church in every country. We need only turn around and see where we have come from to see this illustrated. The Church now has an active presence in more than 165 countries and a presence of some kind in more than 180 countries. Simple arithmetic reveals that there really are not that many nations remaining where we do

not have at least some presence. And, as I have attempted to briefly outline today, the process is a dynamic one.

But for evidences that the Lord's hand is in this work—that He is very much involved in helping to develop a positive perception in the mind of the “man with the stamp”—we need not rely only on numbers. A myriad of anecdotes and personal experiences likewise so testify. One in particular comes in mind.

A few years ago, the Washington Public Affairs Advisory Council had arranged a meet-and-greet event at the home of Senator Gordon and Sister Sharon Smith for key members of the diplomatic corps based in Washington—ambassadors from a number of countries, especially countries where we had been seeking to improve the quality of our legal recognition. All of our Latter-day Saint members of the US Senate, several LDS congressmen, and other government officials had been invited with their spouses. Sister Ann Santini of the Washington, DC, public affairs office and several other members of her staff had planned this event in great detail. I was assigned by the chairman of the Public Affairs Committee at Church headquarters to be the General Authority representative at this event.

I arrived at the Smiths' home in suburban Washington, DC. It is beautiful, and it was manicured to a gnat's eyebrow. A tent had been erected in the yard to host our guests, since it was September and warm in Washington. All was in readiness as the guests began to arrive.

But then seeming disaster struck! The sky clouded over with thunderclouds. The rain began to pour in buckets. Lightning flashed. Thunder rolled. Clearly the event could not be held outside. Even the tent was risky, since it was held up by metal poles, and the static electricity in the air was thick. Sister Santini, with her cadre of veteran Relief Society members, moved the entire thing indoors.

Then, real disaster struck! A bolt of lightning struck an electrical transformer a few blocks away, and the lights went out! In that moment, it seemed like this beautifully planned event was about to become a debacle of the first order!

And that is when Divine Providence entered in. Sister Santini, Sister Smith, and their associates swung into full Relief Society mode. Candles came out, platters of food were rearranged, and the event proceeded.

Now, it is important to understand that for ambassadors based in Washington, each of their evenings is normally consumed with more than one social event. The usual practice is to visit one, stay for a few moments, and then move on to the next. Doubtless, that is what many of these diplomats had planned this particular evening. But there was something about the combination of circumstances that September night in the Smiths' home, not the least of which was the improvisation of these Relief Society sisters, that was captivating. Although a few stayed but a short time and then left, the great majority of them—ambassadors from some of the most influential nations on the planet—just stayed. The intimacy of the candlelit circumstances, the warmth of the hospitality, and, I believe, the promptings of the Spirit kept most of them for an hour or even two. The conversations were informal, and family experiences were exchanged. And what would have otherwise been a semiformal diplomatic event became an informal social event among friends.

I have since told Ann that she could not possibly have planned such an outstanding event. Many of those diplomats who attended have since stated that that improvised event at the Smith home remains one of the most delightfully memorable highlights of their life in Washington. I will say again: the Lord's hand is in this work!

THOMAS KANE

Now, finally, some years ago, I wrote an article for the *Ensign* entitled "Thomas L. Kane: Outrider for Zion."¹¹ It was an article about Colonel Kane, a nonmember and great friend of President Brigham Young and the Latter-day Saints. Colonel Kane, whose influence with President James K. Polk led to the march of the Mormon Battalion, whose lectures and articles in eastern periodicals helped to deflect some of the extreme prejudice that was directed toward the Saints as the mob violence in Illinois intensified, and whose indomitable spirit and negotiating skills played a pivotal role in resolving the so-called Utah War of 1857–58. After Colonel Kane died in 1883, his wife wrote President George Q. Cannon, telling him that the last words spoken by her husband were his wish that his affections be transmitted to, as he put it, his "dear Mormon friends."¹² President Brigham Young had once said of Colonel Thomas L. Kane that his "name

would be had in honorable remembrance among the Latter-day Saints to all generations.”¹³

There are many Thomas Kanes in today’s world. They are good men and women who are fair-minded and decent. Many of these are the “men with the stamps” who need only to be exposed to the goodness and decency of the Latter-day Saints. I believe that when the history of this dispensation is finally written in its entirety, many of their names will likewise be held in honorable remembrance by the Saints in all generations.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 134.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 44:4–5; emphasis added.
4. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.
5. See, for example, 1 Nephi 13:10.
6. 1 Nephi 11–14.
7. See Articles of Faith 1:12.
8. Lance B. Wickman, “Today,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 103–7.
9. From Rudyard Kipling, “The Naulahka” (New York: MacMillan, 1892), lines 21–24.
 Now it is not good for the Christian’s health to hustle the Aryan brown,
 For the Christian riles, and the Aryan smiles and he weareth the Christian down;
 And the end of the fight is a tombstone white with the name of the late deceased,
 And the epitaph drear: “A Fool lies here who tried to hustle the East.”
10. Doctrine and Covenants 1:23; emphasis added.
11. Lance B. Wickman, “Thomas L. Kane: Outrider for Zion,” *Ensign*, September 2003, 56–63.
12. As quoted in Albert L. Zobell Jr., *Sentinel in the East* (Salt Lake City: Nicholas G. Morgan, 1965), 228–29.
13. John Smith’s Patriarchal Blessings, 1846–49, 211, Church History Library; emphasis added; capitalization and punctuation standardized.