9

The Non-Mormon *Mormony*

Authority, Religious Tolerance, and Sectarian Identification in Late Imperial Russia

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In early 1913, a clipping of a previously published article in the Russian newspaper *Kolokol* (the Bell) was sent to government officials in Samara province (located in the southern part of Russia). The article was filled with rumors that originated in the village of Nikolaevskii, also in Samara province. It identified a religious sect that conducted a series of religious rites of passage that involved sexual acts with young girls. The article, titled "Po svobode sovesti" (On Freedom of Conscience), argued that a group of *Mormony* (Mormons), as they were locally known, carried out mysterious religious practices within their large homes in the village.[1]

The author suggested that the *Mormony* were a sect of religious fanatics who lived communally in the village, and included in their number were wealthy farmers, elderly women, children, and some peasants. Further, this group of *Mormony* was subjected

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A. Il'ina, Podrobnyi Atlas Rossiiskoi Imperii c planami glavnykh gorodov *(St. Petersburg: Izdanie kartograficheskago zavedeniia, 1871).*

with some regularity to the scoffing and laughing of the local peasants who perpetuated a broad range of rumors about the community's members. Locals saw this religious group as troublesome and enigmatic; therefore, they argued its members ought to be investigated by government officials to determine whether they were heretics and criminals or merely a divergent branch of the Orthodox Church. Since they were known by the appellation "Mormons," the Russian government decided that the most appropriate beginning point for such an investigation was to identify parallels between the practices and rituals of the Russian *Mormony* those of the American religion associated with Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and Salt Lake City. A search of available records in Russian central state archives suggests that late nineteenth-century

and early twentieth-century Russian emphasis on the *Mormony* was only a passing interest, and fears of connection to the American Mormon movement were quickly dispelled. This fact is supported by the paucity of Church records and available knowledge about early Latter-day Saint attempts to proselyte in the Russian Empire during the late tsarist period.[2]

The subject of Russian *Mormony* is not altogether new. When Latter-day Saint missionaries began proselyting in Russia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, those located in the southern Volga region occasionally encountered individuals or groups referred to as *Mormony*. Researchers Gary Browning and Eric Eliason spent several weeks traveling through the region in 2000 in hopes of finding the roots of the group they referred to, rather confusingly, as "pre-perestroika Saints."[3] Aleksandr Klibanov, a Russian expert on sectarian movements, argued that the name *Mormony* was given to a group of Molokans (named for their drinking of milk, or *moloko*, during Lent and other fast days which was prohibited by Russian Orthodoxy) by Orthodox believers because they suspected that the former practiced polygamy.[4] When such efforts proved fruitless, Browning and Eliason settled on four hypotheses about the potential roots of this group to account for a missing historical record.[5] The two researchers concluded that the most probable explanation for the origins of the group were not to be found in searching for theological parallels. Rather, the use of the term "Mormon" served as a descriptor of public religious practice that diverged from normative Russian Orthodoxy. While some of these aberrant practices were similar to Latter-day Saint practices, they were not related theologically. In order to fill in the gaps, Browning and Eliason worked through oral interviews with Russian members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with President Sheridan T. Gashler (1998–2001) of the Samara Mission, and with at least one "Old Molokan" man who lived in the region.[6] Their work, while foundational in many respects to the study

of Russian *Mormony,* failed to account for the work of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government nearly eighty years earlier to solve this very question about the origins of this group.

The primary aim of this chapter is to highlight the available sources in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA) that remained unexamined even during the heyday of *Mormony* studies in the early 2000s. These early sources show quite clearly that as early as 1913 *Mormony* were determined by Russian officialdom to have no connection to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was not until Latter-day Saint missionaries began proselyting in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union that the question became interesting once again for members of the Church seeking lost members of the Church. Thus one of the secondary contributions of this paper is to provide a case study where scholars interested in international Church history would be well served to consult not only archives located in Salt Lake City but also the relevant archival sources in the countries of interest.

In this short article I analyze two previously unstudied sets of documents that comprise reports submitted to the Russian Imperial Department of Spiritual Affairs (*Departament Dukhovnykh Del*), the ministerial organ of the Russian government responsible for regulating religious life within the Russian Empire. The investigations described in these two reports examine the beliefs, practices, and culture of the *Mormony* by juxtaposing the Russian group with the American religion between 1912 and 1915. In doing so, they also show the major characteristics, most often through stereotypes, attributed to American Mormonism within early twentieth-century Russia. Locals criticized Russian *Mormony* because of their rituals and practices that presumably crossed certain moral and cultural boundaries. The local population, as evidenced in these reports and letters, was most disturbed by the sectarians' polygamous lifestyle, their general treatment of women, and the secretive nature of their religious meetings.

Thus this examination of American Mormonism and Russian *Mormony* shows the interplay between these possible threats to Russian Orthodoxy. In the process of weeding out heretical movements, Russian church and state authorities practiced politics by categorization, defined by those elements that were dogmatically acceptable and those viewed by the Orthodox Church as heretical. The government reports highlighted the interplay between center and periphery in the Russian Empire while also testing, as it were, nineteenth-century Russian knowledge of American Mormonism. The Russian government needed a definition of "Mormonism," which it garnered from a broad range of material to define a native sectarian movement. In doing so, Mormonism as practiced in late nineteenth-century America became the standard by which these investigators measured the origins and beliefs of the Russian *Mormony*. While the official reports and investigative documents proved that no identifiable connection existed between the *Mormony* and the Mormons, in the process they also provided insights into the extent of their knowledge of Mormonism in a land that had very little, if any, previous Latter-day Saint missionary activity in it. Unsurprisingly, the conclusions they reached about American Mormonism emphasized Latter-day Saint uniqueness (or rather bizarreness) when compared to Russian religious sensibilities.

Conversion and Religious Identity in a Confessional Empire

In order to understand why government officials fixated on finding a definition of Mormonism in 1913, it must be kept in mind that during the imperial period, Russia was "a confessional state."[7] During the nineteenth century, the tsarist government maintained a fair degree of stability through the regulation of confessions, or religious identification. Although the government fully endorsed

and privileged Russian Orthodoxy above all other religions, officials also routinely co-opted local schismatic Christian and non-Christian groups to assure stability and loyalty. As part of this process, tsarist officials sought to classify aberrant Christian practices and communities—hence the interest in identifying the roots of the *Mormony.* The empire contained a broad range of sectarian groups that fell under the umbrella term "*dukhovnye khristiane*" (Spiritual Christians).[8] Spiritual Christians were consistently on the mind of the Russian imperial authorities because they mirrored Russian Orthodoxy at times while also threatening the very core of Orthodox doctrine and tradition.[9] Lumped within this broad category of Spiritual Christians were the *Mormony*, and because of this association they were therefore suspect in the eyes of the Russian government and Orthodox Church. Spiritual Christians tended toward pacifism, drew upon apocalyptic renderings of scripture, and generally refused the sacraments, church ecclesiastical authority, and rejected icons as necessary for worship.[10] Some of them chose to drink milk during *Velikii Post* (Lent) and other fast days, a forbidden practice within Russian Orthodoxy; others valued self-castration (*Skoptsy*), and others chose to reject external authority in favor of personal revelation (*Dukhobors*). After 1870, the term *Mormony* was used by opponents to Spiritual Christian groups interchangeably with Molokans, Skoptsy, and Dukhobors, and often in connection with claims of a deviant sexual culture that promoted immorality and hostility toward church authority and de-emphasized the centrality of the Bible.

One modern definition of these groups suggested that the designation "Spiritual Christians" ought to be used "when generally referring to . . . non-Orthodox, non-Jewish, non-Muslim, and similar faiths and/or groups in Old Russia whose ancestry may be a mixture of Armenian, Chuvash, Finn, German, Russian, Tatar, Ukrainian, Mordvin, etc."[11] Indeed, a definition such as this is so inclusive that it might negate any usefulness. In order to sort

out the various differences between these many groups, Russian bureaucrats and clergy needed to identify and classify their various beliefs and practices. It was the process of classification of religious faith and practice that led government officials to take on this question of the Russian *Mormony.* The Russian government had a long-held tradition of protecting Orthodoxy from potential threats—a task that was assigned to various government ministries and offices that functioned in spiritual and secular spaces simultaneously.[12] In this effort, the government was driven by a sense of controlling the boundaries of Orthodoxy and limiting the spread of seemingly heretical movements within the empire.

The imperial government tightly controlled all religious affairs, including conversion and liturgical developments, and it identified its population by religious affiliation. Earlier rulers sought to bring the Church under the auspices of the imperial government and used the clergy to help encourage allegiance to the tsars and their policies. Thus the symbiotic relationship of church and state in imperial Russia served an important function of creating boundaries of belief and religious practice. Conversion in a confessional empire such as Russia was a tightly regulated process because it involved the transformation for potential converts from minority positions into majority, mainstream religious identity and thereby allowed the newly converted individual to access the rights and privileges associated with Russian Orthodoxy identity. In many cases, conversion was not a matter of personal preference or spiritual promptings in the Russian Empire, but might be more easily understood as a religious *and* political act. This is not to suggest that converts understood conversion only as a means to attain greater rights, though some certainly saw it in this way, but to highlight potential incentives of conversion.

Fears of a gradual wearing away of the buttresses of official Russian identity—Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality—led government

officials to further protect evangelized Russians from potential threats by adherents of aberrant religious sects.[13] Thus, religious conversion must be viewed as a potential wellspring of religious and political dissent in a society that was ideologically built upon solid state-church foundations. In her broad study of conversion and its meaning, Gauri Viswanathan argued:

> In its most transparent meaning as a change of religion, conversion is arguably one of the most unsettling political events in the life of a society. This is irrespective of whether conversion involves a single individual or an entire community, whether it is forced or voluntary, or whether it is the result of proselytization or inner spiritual illumination. Not only does conversion alter the demographic equation within a society and produce numerical imbalances, but it also challenges an established community's assent to religious doctrines and practices.[14]

Given the confessional nature of the Russian Empire, government officials aggressively attempted to control the process by which sectarian groups actively sought new proselytes because individual adoptions of non-Orthodox faith potentially undermined the legitimacy of the imperial claim to religious and cultural unity. In order to convert to Russian Orthodoxy (it was illegal to convert to a non-Christian religion until 1905), one needed to submit a series of letters of intent, as well as testimonials from reliable sources, to local church officials, state bureaucrats, in some cases even the Ministry of Internal Affairs (which oversaw the police force), and—in exceptional cases—the tsar himself.[15]

When the *Kolokol* article was brought to the attention of government officials, they did just as they had for other potentially "heretical" or subversive religious movements. Official investigations into the sect initiated at the local level and later moved to the state level. In the case of the *Mormony*, the local population had already begun this process of inquiry and inquisition into the religious practices and beliefs of the group. It was the local population that applied the term

Mormony to this sect and did so because of a preexisting (albeit vague) knowledge of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United States and Europe.[16] Although the Russian investigation highlighted the differences between the two movements, it also showed how some degree of minor heresy was preferred over full adoption of a foreign religion that, according to the investigation's perspective, emphasized the gradual overthrow of world governments, encouraged polygamous relations, and sought to add to the Bible.

Early Church Efforts to Evangelize Russia

The history of Russian interaction with missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is yet to be written. Missionaries from the Church never fully engaged in proselytizing in Russia during the nineteenth century. However, Joseph Smith identified Russia as a site of important missionary activity in the early years of the Church. Russia was on the mind of Joseph Smith in 1843 when he called upon Elders Orson Hyde and George Adams to fulfill missions to Russia. Orson Hyde's communication to the Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, and Liverpool, England, during his journey through Palestine and Europe in 1841 and 1842 suggests that he possessed an interest in Russia as a critical location for the future proclamation of the gospel.[17] From his earliest days in the Church, Orson Hyde was picked out as one who was "called by his ordination to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the Spirit of the living God, from people to people, and from land to land, in the congregations of the wicked, in their synagogues, reasoning and expounding scriptures with them."[18] Joseph Smith indicated in an article in the *Times and Seasons* that Hyde and Adams had received a call to go to Russia and begin spreading the gospel in that land.[19] Although the missions were never fulfilled, evidence suggests that Joseph Smith understood Russia as a critical link to the expansion of the Church across the globe. The *Times and Seasons*

pronouncement noted, "Our worthy brother, Elder George J. Adams, has been appointed by the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Nauvoo to present to them the importance, as well as things connected with his mission to Russia, to introduce the fullness of the Gospel to the people of that vast empire, and also to which is attached some of the most important things concerning the advancement and building up of the kingdom of God in the last days, which cannot be explained at this time."[20] Hyde and Adams never made the trip to Russia.

Despite the failed efforts of Orson Hyde and Joseph Smith to evangelize the empire, Russians gradually became aware of the Mormon movement through a variety of sources and possible connections. The first real evidence of Mormon missionaries who actively taught potential converts in Russia is contained in a short article printed in the *Millennial Star* in 1895.[21] Elder A. J. Höglund traveled from Gothenburg, Sweden, to St. Petersburg, Russia, to meet with a family that had earlier communicated their interest in the Church to the president of the Scandinavian Mission, Peter Sundwall.[22] Höglund met with the Lindelof family in St. Petersburg beginning Sunday, June 9, and then baptized the family on June 11, 1895.[23] Before leaving St. Petersburg, Höglund ordained Brother Lindelof an elder and taught him about his responsibilities.[24] The energetic Lindelof family appears to have been the only group of Mormon converts in St. Petersburg at the time. They were exiled out during the Soviet period, and no further missionary efforts were made within Russia.

The Official Government Report on the *Mormony*

The persecutory tone in the *Kolokol* article attempted to build a case against the religious sect based on unacceptable sexual practices, suspicious (i.e., un-Orthodox) religious rites, and a seemingly

offensive "communal" lifestyle. A local Samara court authority, Evgenii Menkin, wrote to the governor of Samara province and included seven "clippings" of the *Kolokol* article, along with a plea that "your Excellency not deny the facts listed in the report."[25] Menkin's request remained either unanswered or not taken seriously until late September 1913 when another bureaucratic arm of the Russian government, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstva Vnutrennykh Del*), got involved. The ministry apparently had heard further reports (not included in the file contained in RGIA) that the *Mormony* were again causing havoc in Nikolaevskii. The letters continued to petition the government for assistance in dealing with this aberrant sect of religious fanatics and, by mid-1914, the local population began calling for the local *Mormony* to be removed from the village. According to this letter, the *Mormony* in nearby villages were rather troublesome and difficult for the local populations to deal with on a daily basis. One report (dated June 23, 1914) indicated that parishioners in the village of Blagodarovki had earlier held a town hall meeting (March 24, 1913) and determined to ask for assistance in "petitioning for the removal of followers of the *Mormony* religious sect and the complete removal of them from society."[26] These reports followed a formulaic nature for the most part and included accusations of poor treatment of women, polygamy, and portrayals of poor health and filth among some of the members. Before the *Mormony* could legally be exiled from the community, an investigation needed to define the offense and determine if such suspicions were indeed verifiable.

Within this report there is evidence of some maneuvering around the question of "Are these American Mormons?" More importantly, however, was the initial interest in possible cases of sexual abuse and polygamy. The frame of reference for the investigation remained the American Mormons, but the investigators seemed more concerned about the welfare of the women in the community. Russians were aware of the challenges that the American church members faced

Tsar Nicholas II, 1896 *by Il'ia Efimovich Repin (1844–1930).*

leading up to 1913, including the efforts to distance themselves from polygamy. Polygamy was seen as a foreign idea and thus a clear marker of a non-Orthodox movement. Thus it served as the key category of difference for these investigations. In the final years of Nicholas II's reign, a last-ditch effort to reassert Russian national sentiment based on a claim to Orthodoxy led to a broad range of official and unofficial searches into the mysterious world of the Russian "Spiritual Christian" world.

Another report from Baku (current day Azerbaijan), near Armenia, is even more instructive in this investigation into prerevolutionary *Mormony*.[27] From 1912 until 1915, local leaders began to investigate the arrests of *Mormony* in Baku (fifteen individuals were arrested) and tried to figure out where they came from and what they believed. With Baku's central location on the Caspian Sea, it was not out of the realm of possibility that in fact some small group of individuals might have met early Mormon missionaries in the Near East.[28] In the Baku report about the arrests of *Mormony*, the questions that officials sought to answer involved those associated with the specific differences between the *Skoptsy*, Molokans, and Mormons. Beyond trying to differentiate between American religious groups and the *Mormony*, the government went further to show how they (the *Mormony*) matched up with similar Spiritual Christian groups. On the Russian frontier, where these groups were found, the term

Spiritual Christian was used broadly to define any and all sectarian movements, with the distinctions between them often confused or used interchangeably.

In doing so, what developed on the pages of the 1913 Department of Spiritual Affairs in St. Petersburg's report about religious practices in Baku are fairly detailed discussions of sacraments, religious meetings (nature of hymns and prayers) and the role of religious authority within each sect. The report indicated that there were two groups (*dve gruppy*) of *Mormony* in the city.[29] The government looked specifically at the case of one Pavel Evdokimov Riashentsev, who is labeled a "Mormon leader" in the report and who "decided upon the desire to attach himself (via conversion) to the sect of Spiritual Christians (Molokans)."[30] While the Russian government could hardly closely govern the movement of Spiritual Christians back and forth amongst the competing sectarian groups, it did become concerned when the issue of women was involved. Riashentsev was married to Ksenia Grigor'evna, and although the report focused heavily on Riashenstev, it later turned to Ksenia, a potentially plural wife. The threat of polygamy in the Russian Empire raised flags among Russian authorities because of the long history of these Spiritual Christians mutilating their bodies (as in the case of the self-castrating *Skoptsy*) and deviant sexual practices.

The investigator became preoccupied with the pattern of worship and the practices within the prayer house. Spiritual Christians in the Samara and Saratov regions often met secretly in homes and even went so far as to place "watchmen" to scout for danger lurking in the streets. "It is observed," the report noted, "that for prayer the sectarians meet often in their homes, sing psalms and other spiritual songs. However, no statute or regulation that precisely defined the essence of the teachings of the local Mormons is available. We have not observed any instance of polygamy and know only that their chief goal is to "*dostizheniia Cv. Dukha*" (obtain the Holy Ghost).[31] In this

regard, the *Mormony* were not altogether different than the broader categories of Spiritual Christians, as they all sought spiritual experience and knowledge through mystical communion with the Holy Spirit. In cases where polygamy and sexual abuse factors could not be proven, the investigators seemed willing to turn the individual jurisdiction over to the local priest to make decisions regarding religious praxis and orthodoxy. This reflected the empire's privileging Russian Orthodoxy over other Christian groups—the priest could legally intervene in the affairs of sectarian religious life when it was seen as a merely religious affair that was not particularly dangerous to Russian society generally.

Ultimately, Leonid Pospelov (the local priest in Baku) declared that Riashenstev's Mormonism "bears no resemblance to the American Mormon sect" and even went so far as to argue that there were two distinct communities, the "American Mormons" (who did not exist in Russia) and the "Russian Mormons." The report shunned American Mormonism in the end because ultimately, it concluded, "Baku region and Samara region *mormony* don't have anything in common with American Mormons, because among Russian Mormons there is no polygamy or theocracy (*teokratia*) that exists among American Mormons."[32]

It is interesting that the two definitive "American" Mormon traits that emerged out of a lengthy investigation into a heretical group were polygamy (which was no longer practiced by 1913) and the claim of theocracy. Noticeably absent from the discussion was any discussion of Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, or even the possibility of prophetic figures who could talk with God. Theocracy was not a foreign idea to the Russian rulers nor to the Russian Orthodox Church; indeed, a significant group of Russian Silver Age (late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century) writers including Vladimir Solov'ev (who wrote about Mormons), Sergei Bulgakov, and Pavel Florenskii wrote extensively about the idea and longed for a future

date when the rule of God would unite the world.[33] In this way, American Mormonism embodied a model for some disillusioned Russians who longed for a greater religiosity (often through mystical means) than they experienced. In the United States, contemporary anti-Mormons discovered an emphasis on an imminent rule of Joseph Smith, the Nauvoo Council of Fifty, and ideally, the ushering in of the Kingdom of God on earth in the modern world.[34] Thus, when the Russian theological journals and writers picked up on the ideas, they did so out of a familiarity with early anti-Mormon themes but also out of an awareness of some of the most prescient religious ideas gaining currency in late tsarist intellectual circles. At the same time, they tended to mirror the early complaints while ignoring some of the contemporary developments within Latter-day Saint history that moved the American church away from the substance of these earlier attacks.[35]

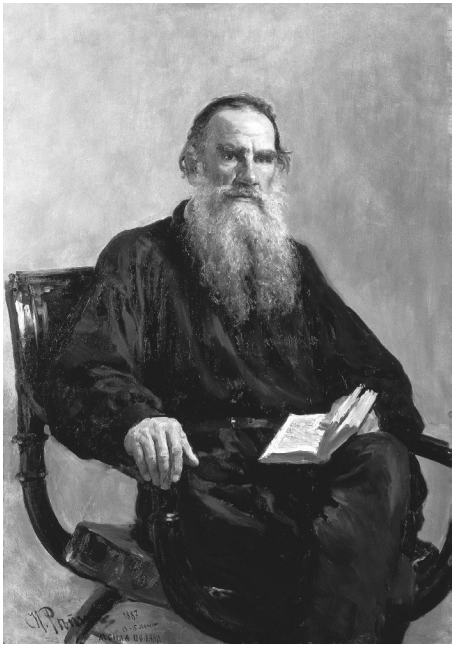
Available Knowledge about Mormonism

How do we account for the broad yet flawed knowledge of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among Russian clergy and intellectuals from the 1860s onwards? There were many avenues for them to gain knowledge about Mormonism—namely, the theological journals and popular literary works. Some individuals corresponded with members in Europe and even a few in the United States. I provide two examples here to show the breadth and source of available knowledge.

One such example might well be the famed writer Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). Between January 11 and January 13, 1889, Tolstoy recorded the following in his journal: "I've had dinner and want to write up the days I missed. Made a few rough entries. Read *The Mormons' Bible* and *The Life of Smith* (George Q. Cannon's 1888 *Life of Joseph Smith The Prophet*) and was horrified. Yes, religion, actually religion, is a work of deceit. Lies for a good purpose."[36] Two days later, Tolstoy continued:

> Read about the Mormons, and understood the whole story. Yes, here is a glaringly obvious example of that deliberate deceit which is a part of every religion. I even wondered whether this element of conscious fabrication—not cold blooded fabrication, but a poetic, enthusiastic half-belief in itself—isn't an exclusive sign of what is called religion. There is fabrication in Mohammad and Paul. There isn't with Christ. It has been falsely imputed to Him. He would not have been turned into a religion had it not been for the fabrication of the resurrection, and the chief fabricator was Paul.[37]

Around the same time that Tolstoy reflected on Joseph Smith and modern religion, he wrote a letter to Nikolai Vasilievich Mikhailov, a university student from Kharkov, about the potential benefits of reading the "great books." In his letter, the Russian writer suggested that of all the books in the world, those of greatest importance were the sacred texts of the world's major religions. One ought to know, he argued, that the "ideas of people which are the basis of beliefs and the guiding principles of life of millions and millions of people are the most necessary and the most important ideas."[38] In another letter to Gavril Andreievich Rusanov, Tolstoy suggested that the books "I always carry with me, and which I would like to have always, are the unwritten books: The Prophets, the Gospels, Beal's Buddha, Confucius, Mencius, Lao-Tzu," and others.[39] For someone of Tolstoy's stature to



Lev Tolstoy, 1887, *by Il'ia Efimovich Repin.*

comment on the American Mormons should not surprise us, given the abundance of material available to the reading public. And yet, it is interesting that it is his curiosity about Mormonism that provoked his ranting about the nature of all religions in this case. Great thinkers who were Tolstoy's contemporaries in other countries considered the "Mormon Question" and critically analyzed Mormon theology, and more importantly, Mormon "civilization in the west."[40] Tolstoy's fascination with Mormonism—as evidenced by the edition of the Book of Mormon (a gift from Brigham Young's daughter, Susa Young Gates) located on his bookshelf in the museum dedicated to him—has often received popular attention among members of the Church today.[41]

Another avenue for knowledge about Mormons and Mormonism for nineteenth-century Russians was the expansive *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* (Church Bulletin). *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* was the journal of the St. Petersburg Orthodox Theological Academy. In September 1877, the journal, which was read widely by many seminarians, priests, professors, and government bureaucrats, published an obituary of the prophet Brigham Young.[42] Brigham Young figured prominently only one year earlier in a detailed "history" of the American religion in the same journal, simply titled "*Mormony*."[43] This article is important because it shows the degree to which the writers (and by extension, many of the readers) were familiar with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the migration to Salt Lake City (an object of fascination for many of them). Within the obituary of Brigham Young, his many wives figured more prominently than he did at times—particularly Ann Eliza, who "*bezhala*" (ran) to New York—polygamy again reigning supreme in terms of interesting subjects. In 1879, *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* also carried a brief article titled "Religious Sects in America" that supplied statistical data on the Church and reflected the growing international composition of the Church.[44] Thus it is clear that many years before the 1912–15 investigations of the *Mormony*, there existed a broad knowledge about The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, albeit more fanciful and stereotyped than members of the Church might hope.

Conclusion

In the end, both of these reports concluded that these groups known as *Mormony* were nothing more than odd mixtures of Old Belief, sectarian offshoots, and Spiritual Christians that through some unknown path gained the appellation that associated them with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. By examining the reports submitted to government officials during a particularly contentious period in Russian history (1911–15) when matters of religion and the reassertion of the primacy of Russian Orthodoxy were at the forefront of Nicholas II's policies, we learn a great deal about how Russian intellectuals, priests, and everyday folks thought about the term "Mormons." The attempts to delineate between religious groups were critical for supplanting heresies that threatened to shatter the Orthodox world by promoting new religions. We learn something of the way that people used "foreign" faiths to describe those that were unusual or deemed harmful within Orthodoxy and gain greater insight into the ways that confessional empires operate by projecting otherness onto foreign beliefs to distance heretical groups from their own tradition. Finally, by examining their categories of belief, we also learn more about how they understood and characterized American Mormonism. Indeed, we find that the global reach of Mormonism transcended borders and reached into places where there were *Mormony* but not Mormons.

Notes

1. "Po svobode sovesti," *Kolokol*, no. 2075. A copy of the article is available in microfilm form as part of the Department of Spiritual Affairs report located

in *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv* (Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg). The collection reference is RGIA, collection (fond) 821, section (opis) 133, document (delo) 230 (4 April 1913–5 December 1913). The term "*Mormony*" is used here as it was in the documents found in the Russian State Historical Archive.

2. The one exception was the Finnish Duchy, where as many as two hundred converts joined the Church between 1875 and 1895. See Zachary R. Jones, "Conversion amid Conflict: Mormon Proselytizing in Russian Finland, 1867–1914," *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 1–41.
3. Eric A. Eliason and Gary L. Browning, "Russia's Other 'Mormons': Their Origins and Relationship to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 7–34. The use of "pre-perestroika Saints" is confusing as the authors' concluded that there is no connection between the *Mormony* and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Further, there is no archival source that employs "Saints" as an appellation for these groups in Russia. It should also be noted that about one year after the researchers' trip to the Samara region, one of Browning's undergraduate students, James W. Scott, traveled to the area to conduct similar research on the *Mormony* groups in the region. Scott subsequently posted his conclusions on his personal web-page, "Russian Mormonism: History of a Native Russian Sect," scottcorner.org /russianmormons.
4. Aleksandr Klibanov, *Narodnaia sotsial'naia utopia v Rossii: XIX vek* (Moscow: Izd. Nauka, 1978). Klibanov discussed this issue and clearly articulated the idea that there was no connection between the Molokans and Mormons. See also Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia, 1860–1917* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 152–53. To avoid confusion, *Mormony* is used in this paper to describe the Russian group known by the term.
5. Browning and Eliason suggested that the most probable explanation for the origins of the group was not to be found in searching for theological parallels, but rather in recognizing the use of the term "Mormon" in Russia as a potential descriptor of a religious practices that, although similar to Latter-day Saint practice historically, are maintained publically by individuals within normative Russian Orthodoxy.

6. The audiocassettes with the recorded conversations between Eliason, Browning, and Gashler are located in Eric A. Eliason papers, Vault MSS 7914, box 1, folder 11, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. It is clear that Browning and Eliason were rightly skeptical of an actual relationship between the groups, despite Gashler's passionate claims that the Russian *Mormony* were in fact lost Mormons with real connections to American Mormons.
7. Robert Crews, "Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *American Historical Review* 108, no. 1 (2003): 50–83.
8. The *dukhovnye khristiane* movement splintered by the beginning of the nineteenth century when the two major factions, the Dukhobors (dukhobortsy) and the Molokans, disagreed over the place of authority. Dukhobors emphasized individual spiritual experience while Molokans believed in the primacy of authority located in the biblical text.
9. Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 56–59. Engelstein shows how the *Skoptsy* (self-castrators) were the object of a similar investigation in 1844 when the well-respected lexicographer Vladimir Dal headed an investigation within the Ministry of Internal Affairs to classify and illuminate *Skoptsy* religious practice and belief.
10. J. Eugene Clay, "The Woman Clothed in the Sun: Pacifism and Apocalyptic Discourse among Russian Spiritual Christian Molokan-Jumpers," *Church History* 80, no. 1 (March 2011): 109–38.
11. Andrei Conovaloff, "Taxonomy of 3 Spiritual Christian Groups: *Molokane, Pryguny* and *Dukhizhizniki*—Books, Fellowship, Holidays, Prophets, and Songs," www.molokane.org/taxonomy/.
12. Gregory L. Freeze, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), xxxi.
13. The Minister of Education, Sergei Semenovich Uvarov (1786–1855) during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55) articulated the threefold definition of Russian identity.
14. Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xi.

15. For one example of the documentary evidence of potential converts and the due diligence associated with the conversion process, see the file associated with the conversion of Vasilli Abram Levison (1814–1869), a Jewish convert from the German territories who came to Russia during his conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. The files are located in RGIA collection 797, section 9, document 25232, pages 16–17. Delo Kantseliarii Ober-Prokurora Sviateishago Pravitel'stvuiushchago Sinoda, "O zhelanii evreev Levisona primet' pravoslavnuiu veru."
16. Tania Rands Lyon, "The Discovery of Native 'Mormon' Communities in Russia," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 1–24.
17. Hyde's interest in Russia as a possible site of future missionary work was connected to his primary interest in the "return" of Jews in Europe to Palestine. See Hyde's letter to Parley P. Pratt, Letter IV in Orson Hyde, *A Voice from Jerusalem or a Sketch of the Travels and Ministry of Elder Orson Hyde, Missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to Germany, Constantinople, and Jerusalem* (Liverpool: P. P. Pratt, 1842), 34.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 68:1. When Orson Hyde was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in October 1831 by his former pastor Sidney Rigdon, he, along with others, asked Joseph Smith for a revelation about what he ought to do for the kingdom of God. Joseph Smith received a revelation on Hyde's behalf the following day, November 1, 1831.
19. Joseph Smith, "Recommendatory," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1843, 218. In the June 28, 1843, edition, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* mentioned that Hyde had addressed a large crowd during the Fourth of July celebrations and that he was a newly appointed missionary to St. Petersburg, Russia. See "The 4th of July," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 28, 1843, 38.
20. Smith, "Recommendatory," 218. On Adams, see Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of the *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 440.
21. Anthon H. Lund, "Introduction of the Gospel into Russia," *Millennial Star*, vol. 57, no. 26 (27 June 1895): 413–15. This is a report originally written by Höglund

and then published in the *Millennial Star* by President Anthon H. Lund in Liverpool, England. See also the report contained in Andrew Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1927), 343–44.

22. For a biographical statement on Sundwall, see Andrew Jenson, "Sundwall, Peter," in *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 3:724.
23. Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 414.
24. Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission*, 343.
25. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 10.
26. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 14.
27. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 8.
28. Richard O. Cowan mentions that Jacob Spori and Mischa Markow met while on a steamship from Alexandria to Constantinople in about 1887. See "Mischa Markow: Mormon Missionary to the Balkans," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 1 (Autumn 1970): 92–98.
29. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 4.
30. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 5.
31. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 4.
32. RGIA, collection 821, section 133, document 230, page 7.
33. See Vladimir Solov'ev, "Mormonstvo," in *Entisklopedicheskii slovar,* ed. F. A. Brokhaus (St. Petersburg: Brokgauz i Efron, 1896), 19:863–66.
34. For one argument along these lines, see Alex Beam, *American Crucifixion: The Murder of Joseph Smith and the Fate of Mormonism* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014), 31–33.
35. There existed a broad range of possible sources that reflected a more updated view of Mormonism available in Russian to them, though these collections tended to be more damaging than the earlier American anti-Mormon tracts. See, for example, Eduard Romanovich Tsimmerman, *Puteshestvie po Amerike v 1869–1870* (Moscow: K. T. Soldatnekova, 1872), 296–305. For a good summary of this work, see Zachary R. Jones, "Conversion amid Conflict," 6–7.
36. R. F. Christian, ed. and trans., *Tolstoy's Diaries*, vol. 1, *1847–1894* (New York: Scribner Press, 1985), 236.

37. Christian, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, 1:236.
38. "Letter to N. V. Mikhailov, 16 February 1889," in *Tolstoy's Letters*, vol. 2, *1880–1910*, ed. and trans. R. F. Christian (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1978), 439.
39. "Letter to G. A. Rusanov, 12 March 1889," in *Tolstoy's Letters*, 2:442. Rusanov was a landowner from Voronezh who attributed to Tolstoy his decision to become a Christian.
40. See, for example, Paul E. Kerry, "Thomas Carlyle's Draft Essay on the Mormons," in *Literature and Belief* 25, nos. 1 and 2 (2005): 261–88.
41. See Thomas J. Yates, "Count Tolstoi and the American Religion," *Improvement Era*, February 1939, 94. See also Leland A. Fetzer, "Tolstoy and Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 6 (Spring 1971): 27; and Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 21–22, 97.
42. *Tserkovnyi Vestnik* 2, no. 35 (September 13, 1877): 13.
43. "*Mormony*," *Tserkovnyi vestnik* 1, no. 46 (November 20, 1876): 11–13; Chast' Neofitsial'naia (Unofficial Section).
44. "Religioznya sekti v Amerike," *Tserkovnyi vestnik* 3, nos. 51–52 (December 22–29, 1879): 7–8; Chast' Neofitsial'naia (Unofficial Section).