

9

“THOSE WHO RECEIVE YOU NOT”:  
THE RITE OF WIPING  
DUST OFF THE FEET

For Latter-day Saints, much of our ritual experience is historically related, either formally or by tradition, to similar practices performed in past dispensations. There are times, however, when the ancient practice and the modern version are not the same, either in actual performance or even in meaning. My paper addresses this particular challenge through one specific ritual—shaking or wiping the dust off one’s feet and its place within the missionary environment. —DB

**M**ANY RITUAL BEHAVIORS, PARTICULARLY THE formal institutional rituals more commonly known as the ordinances of the gospel, have textual counterparts in the scriptures that provide meaning for the acts. This may lead one to assume that ritual continuity—or the retention of both meaning and form from one time or place to another—exists across the dispensations. Yet just because the ritual behavior in one dispensation is similar to the ritual behavior of another does not necessarily mean that continuity exists. While some rituals may retain the same basic structure from one dispensation to another, ritual innovation often occurs either because the ritual’s role with the gospel has changed or, more commonly, because the symbolic landscape established by the culture in which the ritual interacts has changed.

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The extent to which such change takes place differs from one ritual to another. Sacrifice, for instance, is practiced radically differently today than in the Old Testament, whereas the sacrament exhibits minimal change; still it would be inaccurate to say that the sacrament has gone unchanged (see Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:19–20; 3 Nephi 18:5–12, 28–31; 20:1–9; Moroni 4–5; D&C 20:75–79). To assume continuity is understandable, as it provides a means by which an affinity between the modern dispensation and older ones is established. But this does not mean that recognizing potential discontinuity between our ritual practice and previous ritual practices need be a negative experience; instead it can be one that edifies our appreciation and understanding of the ritual.

The following study explores the value of recognizing continuity and discontinuity in ritual by examining the rite of wiping the dust off one's feet. Originally attested in Christ's instructions to his disciples concerning their missionary labors, the rite was restored in the early part of this dispensation as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. As we shall see, though similarities in both meaning and form exist in the ancient and modern ritual practices, discontinuity may best explain the ambivalence with which the rite of wiping the dust off one's feet is understood by the average Latter-day Saint.

### **The New Testament Texts**

In the synoptic Gospels, the texts describing the purpose and manner of the rite of shaking or wiping the dust off one's feet are part of Christ's instructions to his disciples concerning their missionary labors. The first of these textual versions in order of canonical appearance is Matthew's:<sup>1</sup>

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

And when ye come into an house, salute it.

And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. (Matthew 10:11–15)

Mark’s version of this instruction is similar, though abbreviated and missing any mention of a blessing based on the worthiness of the inhabitants: “And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city” (Mark 6:10–11).

Finally, Luke also includes this instruction, though considerably pared down: “And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them” (Luke 9:4–5).

Yet this pared-down version is then followed by an extensive set of instructions to the newly called Seventy in chapter 10.

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. (Luke 10:5–12)

Predominant among all of the above texts is the motive as to why the disciples would dust their feet—the lack of reception experienced by the disciples in their various ministerial locations.

Though the reason for the rite is clear within these texts, there has been no consensus among New Testament scholars as to the origin of the rite. Many associate this rite with rabbinic references that mention the need to be cleansed from contamination acquired while on Gentile territory.<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the lack of reception is equated with uncleanness, and therefore the rite is a cleansing rite similar to the rabbinic one. Such an interpretation, while understandable, neglects other elements within these texts that suggest another origin, namely, rites associated with hospitality.

*Hospitality in the Old Testament.* Hospitality has long been recognized as an important part of ancient Mediterranean culture<sup>3</sup> and was the primary means by which the unknown and therefore dangerous outsider could be assimilated and rendered harmless.<sup>4</sup> In this process, the host and guest each had definable, if not always explicit, responsibilities to ensure that a productive social relationship was established.<sup>5</sup> Displayed in a number of ways (offering of meals, rest, and so forth), one of the rites associated with hospitality was the washing of the guest's feet.<sup>6</sup> The rite can be found throughout the Old Testament, one of the better-known occurrences being Abraham's provisions of such for his unnamed guests as recorded in Genesis 18:4: "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." While it is unclear whether Abraham or one of his servants did the washing, the verse suggests that it was the host's responsibility to provide both the space and means to wash the feet. A generation later, Abraham's servant is shown similar hospitality in Laban's household, including water to wash both his and his men's feet (see Genesis 24:32). In 1 Samuel, following the death of Nabal and David's request for Abigail's hand in marriage, Abigail offers to wash the feet of David's messengers upon their arrival (see 1 Samuel 25:41).

The Old Testament also contains examples of inhospitable behavior. For instance, Abigail’s hospitality contrasts, even reverses, the inhospitality proffered by her husband Nabal (see 1 Samuel 25:36–38). The book of Judges is replete with inhospitable acts from Jael’s slaughter of Sisera (see 4:18–22), to Manoah’s inability to recognize the value of his guest (see 13:8–23), to the cruel treatment inflicted upon the unnamed Levitical woman (see 19:14–30). Though only one of these examples mentions the washing of the guest’s feet, the worsening inhospitality depicted within the book suggests that Israel’s inhospitality is equated with its spiritual state.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most infamous example of inhospitality and its negative consequences is the narrative in Genesis 19 of Lot, his guests, and his fellow townspeople. In this instance, Lot shows proper hospitality by providing water for the washing of feet, but the town asks for the guests to be delivered to them without promising the guests safety. As we shall see, this account plays an important role in the New Testament instructions.

*Hospitality, Christ’s teachings, and discipleship.* In the New Testament, rites of hospitality are often expressed in the teachings of Christ. Matthew 25 suggests that hospitality defines the true disciple of Christ: “When the Son of man shall come in his glory . . . then shall he sit. . . . Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father. . . . For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me” (Matthew 25:31–36).

The reader is told that though the true disciple may not have done these things to Christ directly, doing them for others is the same as doing them unto Christ: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (v. 40). Thus, via substitution, hospitality lies at the heart of the disciple’s relationship with Christ.<sup>8</sup> As for those who do not demonstrate hospitality, Christ declares, “Depart from me, ye cursed. . . . For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink” (v. 41–42). The concept of reciprocity used here to describe the consequences of hospitable versus inhospitable behavior reflects the real-life effects of hospitality where reciprocity is the foundation of the guest-host relationship.<sup>9</sup> The sermon

ends with reference to the extended hospitality to be offered to the righteous and the inhospitality that will be experienced by the wicked: "And these [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). The preposition *into* (Greek preposition *eis*) suggests that *life eternal* is being used not to describe a state of being but a place; thus the righteous are invited into God's home by the gracious hospitality of God. The wicked, on the other hand, are to go away to another place, their inhospitality reflected in God's eschatological inhospitality.<sup>10</sup>

The hospitality rite of washing feet played its greatest role in Christ's final series of teachings and reinforced the theme of divine hospitality found throughout. Immediately following the Last Supper, as recorded in John 13, Christ proceeds to wash the feet of his disciples. When Christ reaches Peter, the Apostle challenges Christ's actions by expressing that he never wants Christ to wash and wipe his feet (see John 13:8). It is important to note that Peter is not saying that he does not need his feet washed, only that he desires that Christ not be the one to do it. While the washing of feet is a sign of hospitality, in the New Testament the guests themselves or perhaps the servants of the host, not the hosts, wash the feet. It is likely that Peter feels that Christ may be shaming himself by doing the act himself.<sup>11</sup>

Christ's response is that if the rite is not performed, then Peter can have no part with him (see John 13:8).<sup>12</sup> Peter then exclaims that if this is the case, then Christ should wash not only his feet, but his hands and head as well (see John 13:9), the assumption being that if the washing of feet allows one to have "part" with Christ, then the washing of everything demonstrates Peter's full commitment.<sup>13</sup> Christ then tells Peter that if he had been washed in that manner, then the purpose would have been to become clean, but purity was not the intent of this rite (see John 13:10). In fact, according to the Savior, the majority of the disciples were already clean. Moreover, the text implies that he washes the feet of Judas, who the author says is the one who is unclean. Thus the purpose of the rite is not solely to clean, and apparently not to purify, but is associated with "having part with him."<sup>14</sup>

Following the washing and wiping, Christ sits down again and asks, "Know ye what I have done to you?" (John 13:12). He then proceeds to answer, providing the disciples with an understanding of the proper relationship between the master and the servant—the one sent and the sender. He does this by first acknowledging his role as Master, declaring the correctness of calling him as such, and then stating that if he as Master washes their feet, then they should do likewise to each other. The reasoning is based on the fact that "the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (v. 16). But this in turn reveals Christ's role as the Father's servant; thus he is not, ultimately, the host, but is instead the servant, at least in terms of hospitality, washing the feet of his Master's guests.

Using language similar to that found in the texts about wiping dust off the feet, Christ then teaches that whoever received the disciples received him. Though "receiving" is often understood to refer to the host's responsibilities, it may also refer to the responsibilities of the guest as he or she is to "receive" the host's hospitality. In this particular instance, the disciples are designated as guests; thus this hospitality rite acts as a sign of their "receiving" Christ. Yet in his explanation Christ also reinforces the substitution of disciple for Christ that we have seen earlier: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me" (v. 20), which relies on the "receiving" responsibilities of the host. In other words, Christ also speaks to the disciples who will go out and seek to be received by others.

This back and forth of hospitality responsibilities is given one last twist as Christ then establishes, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (v. 20). The anonymity of the one doing the "receiving" can now speak to both the missionary experience, as the disciple will represent Christ, and to the immediate situation of the Last Supper, in which Christ represents the Father.<sup>15</sup> Thus the rite becomes the means to symbolize the role of hospitality in Christ's teachings concerning the Father and his kingdom, as well as the means to demonstrate one's "receiving" of Christ. The rite is then followed by an extended sermon in which Christ repeatedly speaks of the Father's kingdom and of his going to prepare God's abode for the guests. In John 14, for instance, Christ's promises that he

was going to go before the disciples to prepare a place and “receive [them] unto [him]self; that where [he is], there [they] may be also” (v. 3). In fact, as one reviews John 13–17, hospitality and the attendant roles of guest, host, and servant act as a foundation to the entire discourse.<sup>16</sup>

*Inhospitality and wiping dust off one’s feet.* In many ways, the rite of wiping dust off feet may be thought of as the reverse of the foot-washing rite, if we utilize the social institution of hospitality to provide the meaning behind the act.<sup>17</sup> At the heart of the rite is whether or not the missionaries are received (*dexomai*) by the household, village, or city to which they are ministering.<sup>18</sup> Though the Greek term *dexomai* means in the most general sense “to receive,” it was one of a constellation of terms used to describe Greco-Roman hospitality responsibilities, specifically the responsibility of the host to “receive” the guest, thereby taking care of his or her needs and providing shelter. If the guest was sent by another and was therefore an emissary or ambassador, then reception could also include the message as well as the general needs.<sup>19</sup>

The instructions concerning the rite of wiping dust off the feet are part of a longer series of instructions concerning the hospitality offered to the disciple-missionary. Hospitality was to play a fundamental role in the missionary effort, as is witnessed by Christ’s instructions that the missionary was to travel without money, extra clothes, and particularly provisions. Thus the missionary was entirely dependent upon the hospitality of strangers for sustenance. These injunctions were then followed by the responsibilities the missionary had as a guest within the home. Both the Mark 6:8–11 and the Luke 9:3–5 instructions state that the disciple was to stay in the individual household that took him in until he left the place, and the Luke 10:2–11 instructions state explicitly that the missionary was to remain in the house, eating and drinking what was placed before him.

It is within this larger context of hospitality that we are told that if the disciples were not received, then the rite would be performed. While Matthew’s version states that the rite can be performed against an individual house as well as a city (see Matthew 10:14), Mark’s and both of Luke’s versions mention only performing the rite against the city in which the missionaries were not received. Unfortunately, even with the

larger context of hospitality, it is unclear whether the rite was given in response to a lack of physical hospitality or to rejection of the message. Matthew and Mark’s versions state that “whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words” shall be the recipient of the rite (Matthew 10:14; see Mark 6:11).<sup>20</sup> It is uncertain whether hearing their words also meant accepting and therefore receiving the message. Luke 9 merely mentions that “whosoever will not receive you” will experience the rite, while Luke 10 states that the rite is to be performed with the warning that the kingdom of God was near, suggesting that the inhabitants had also forfeited their right to be a part of the kingdom when they refused to offer hospitality to the missionaries (Luke 9:5; see Luke 10:11).

In terms of the rite itself, we know that it involves the removal of accumulated dirt from the feet, though it is not clear what exactly that entails. Three of the four Gospel texts use a form of the verb *tinassō*, which means to shake or brush. Matthew’s account simply instructs the missionary to “shake off the dust of your feet” (Matthew 10:14). Similarly, the Luke 9 account mentions that it is the “very” dirt of the feet that is to be brushed off (v. 5). Mark’s version recounts that it is the dirt on the soles of the feet that is to be brushed off (see Mark 6:11).

Unlike the above three references, the reference in Luke 10:10–11 describes the rite in a verbal declaration that the disciples are to say when they experience inhospitality: “But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Here, the verb used to describe the rite is *apomassō*, which means to wipe off, and though no mention is made specifically of the feet, the similarities between the rest of the Luke 10 text and the others seem clear. Assuming that Luke 10 implies that it is the feet that are wiped off, the rite, as described in the four Gospel texts, appears to consist of removing the shoe and wiping or brushing the dirt from the feet, most probably the sole. In this, the rite functions like the hospitality rite of feet washing, as both are performed to remove dirt that one acquired by traveling. Yet whereas the latter is offered by a gracious

host to welcome one into the home (the receiving of the guest), the former is performed when one is openly rejected and the expected hospitality is not offered.<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, none of the texts concerning the rite of wiping dust off one's feet mention water, which may emphasize the rite as a response to inhospitality. Because they were not received, they were not offered water for their feet, and thus the traveler is forced to clean their own feet without water. In this light, the positive reciprocity that one would expect from normal hospitality, including a blessing pronounced on the house by the guest, is inverted by performing the act outside of the proper setting of the home; thus negative reciprocity results as the inhospitality is returned in the form of a curse, by a rite that should have led to a blessing, but which now leads to condemnation.<sup>22</sup>

That the rite may be associated with inhospitality is also reflected in the association of the city or household against which the rite is performed with Sodom and Gomorrah. Alluded to as the paradigmatical example of divine retribution, the destruction of these two cities was explained in later literature as the result of their hostility instead of hospitality toward Lot's guests (see Ezekiel 16:49).<sup>23</sup>

While the apparent focus of the Sodom and Gomorrah account is the perverse sexuality threatened by the townspeople, the sexual violence may be understood as the manner by which the inhospitality took expression.<sup>24</sup> Thus, by associating the town or household that does not "receive" Jesus' disciples with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rite of wiping dust off feet as a response to inhospitality is further emphasized.

Of course, one of the challenges of these texts is that they do not describe any actual ritual performance. Instead they are what can be called prescriptive texts prescribing what should happen, not necessarily what did happen in reality.<sup>25</sup> Of greater value to understanding how ritual affected the given society are those ritual texts that can be called descriptive texts because they describe what actually happens in the ritual experience.<sup>26</sup> Acts 13:50–51 is the only descriptive text that we have for this rite in the canon. In the passage we are told that Paul and Barnabas are

expelled from the city of Antioch in Pisidia by the city leadership, whereupon "they shook off the dust of their feet against them." Unfortunately, the text is rather sparse, but what we do have suggests that inhospitality is the primary reason for the performance of the rite. Though Antioch is not the only city in which Paul and his companions experienced persecution, it is the only city recorded in Acts to have officially expelled them from its environs. Thus, in Antioch of Pisidia, the two were not received and therefore performed the rite of wiping dust off the feet.

In summary, shaking or wiping dust off the feet, as recorded in the New Testament, appears to be a rite that fits within a cultural continuum of hospitality and its attendant rites, particularly the washing of feet. It was performed in response to inhospitable behavior exhibited by the inhabitants of a city or household, described as those who did not "receive" the missionary disciple, which reception may have included at least listening to the message proffered. Because they have not been offered the opportunity to wash their feet as expected, the offended disciples were to respond to this inhospitality by wiping off their own feet without water.<sup>27</sup> The consequences of this act were left unsaid, though three of the four texts warn those who had the rite performed against them that they were to experience a worse judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities recognized for their inhospitality, in the Day of Judgment.

### **Wiping the Dust off Feet in the Doctrine and Covenants**

Approximately two thousand years later, the rite of dusting off one's feet again appeared, this time in the context of latter-day missionary work as found in the Doctrine and Covenants, where five prescriptive texts concerning the rite are found. Unlike the New Testament texts, these do not provide different accounts of the same instruction but instead are given five different times over a two-year period. As we shall see, the texts demonstrate an evolving understanding of the rite and its significance.

*D&C 24:15.* The first of these texts is in section 24 as part of the instructions given to Oliver Cowdery in July 1830 before he began his missionary work. Following reassurances that miracles similar to those promised to

the New Testament missionaries would occur for him as well, Oliver is told: “And in whatsoever place ye shall enter, and they receive you not in my name, ye shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing, by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony, and cleansing your feet by the wayside” (v. 15).

The similarities between this rite and the New Testament version are apparent: both incorporate inhospitality terminology (“receive you not”) and both are performed with the removal of dust from the feet. But there are also intriguing differences. The first is the manner in which the missionary was to be received. None of the New Testament texts speak of reception needing to be in the name of Christ. While hospitality was still a social norm in the nineteenth century, in the Western world it was a Christian grace, due to the ubiquity of Christian religious practice.<sup>28</sup> The instruction in D&C 24 and its explicit reference to reception of the guest in the name of Christ (“my name”) suggests that the intended recipients of missionary attention were Christian, a presumption that no longer applies today.

Another difference lay in the rites themselves, as it appears that certain hospitality rites expected in the ancient Near East were no longer practiced or expected. For instance, the washing of the guest’s feet was not as commonplace in 1830 as it was in biblical times, perhaps in part a reflection of the prevalence of closed-toe shoes. Moreover, hospitality by the nineteenth century did not necessarily mean semipermanent lodging as suggested in the New Testament texts. Indeed, as one reviews the missionary labors of the early saints, one finds that they often rented their own space rather than relying simply on the offering of a stranger’s place.<sup>29</sup>

The reference also establishes the rite as a mechanism to cursing. Though cursing is found throughout the scriptures, it is unclear what exactly cursing entails or what is involved in bringing a curse about. It is often associated with the sealing power, subordinated under the general principle that whatsoever one seals on earth is sealed in heaven.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, those scriptures that speak of cursing clarify that the principle generally relates to the consequences that result from covenant breaking in which individuals are beset by afflictions or adversities that restrict

their general prosperity.<sup>31</sup> Richard D. Draper has posited that cursing is ultimately done not through any explicit divine action but by divine withdrawal from a given society.<sup>32</sup> In other words, God's curse is ultimately separating himself from interaction with the offender. If such meaning is applied to this rite, the ritual is then one of separation in which the offending lack of hospitality will lead to separation from God, similar to the purpose of the New Testament rite.

Finally, the rite now appears to include a second step of "cleansing [one's] feet by the wayside" after one has already cast off the dust. What "cleansing" means is unclear though; as we shall see, the other Doctrine and Covenants texts speak of the washing of one's feet as part of the overall ritual process associated with wiping the dust off one's feet. We have already seen that washing is not found in the New Testament texts, perhaps intentionally to highlight the inhospitality of the household or city. While washing would fulfill the purpose of removing the dirt, it also creates ritual ambiguity in that washing often carries the connotation of moral or ethical cleansing, an aspect of the rite that appears to be missing from the New Testament form.

As to the actual purpose of the rite, though it may seem obvious since the instruction is found within a larger set of instructions concerning missionary work, the changes in culture in terms of hospitality suggest that the anachronistic nature of the rite has more to do with establishing the relationship between the primitive church organized in the New Testament and the new dispensation opened by Joseph Smith, rather than punishing the wicked. If this is the case, the ambiguities would be expected since the temporal and cultural differences would create some dissonance in the purpose of the rite.

*D&C 60:15.* The second reference to dusting off one's feet was delivered to the elders of the Church a little over a year later (August 8, 1831): "And shake off the dust of thy feet against those who receive thee not, not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment." Like section 24, this text also includes allusions to the New Testament texts, including the performance of the rite against those "who receive thee not" and the

eschatological consequences that result for those who do not. Yet there is also material not found in either D&C 24:15 or the New Testament texts, in particular the explicit emphasis on the private nature of the rite's performance.

This new instruction is paradoxical. From the New Testament texts, it appears that the rite is to condemn or shame the offending household or town of not providing the socially recognized rites of hospitality. The instruction in Luke 10 explicitly states that this rite and its proclamation is to be made publically "in the streets." By the nineteenth century, the shame experienced by the offender should be more intense since the rite is no longer simply a part of the larger background of hospitality, but viewed by a society well aware of the New Testament and the negative nature of this rite. Yet the text makes clear that the accused is never to know that the rite was even performed, and thus the shame or public condemnation was not the purpose of the rite.

Instead, these instructions appear to highlight the rite's relationship with the performer, in particular the emotional state of the performer. By suggesting that the rite not be performed in public, not only is the offender not going to be offended, but it also provides some time and space between the performance of the rite and the offending event itself. Though not stated explicitly, this undetermined time could be viewed as a "cooling off," so that the rite is not performed in anger, a new element to the rite that is explored in further detail in our next set of instruction.

*D&C 75:19–22.* Five months later, in January of 1832, we are told in a set of general instructions to missionaries: "In whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you, leave your blessing upon that house. And in whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you not, ye shall depart speedily from that house, and shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them. And you shall be filled with joy and gladness; and know this, that in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them; and it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house."

Like other instructions in the Doctrine and Covenants, this one again addresses nonreception, but unlike the other two, it also includes

instructions concerning reception, specifically that the missionaries leave a blessing on the house that does receive them, instruction similar to that found in the Matthew 10 and Luke 10 references.<sup>33</sup> The consequences are again to be experienced at the Day of Judgment.

Yet the text also expands on the performer's responsibilities addressed in section 60, as the reader is now told that the missionary was to leave the situation "speedily," perhaps to avoid escalation and potential violence between the missionary and the offender. The quick response allows for the potential of a hasty decision on the part of the missionaries, meaning that while they may have been physically separated from the scene, if they interpreted "speedily" to mean a small probationary time between the encounter and the performance of the rite, it was possible that the wrong decision may have been made. The negative potential for a quick response is tempered by the next set of instructions, which lays out the responsibility of the performer. We are told that the performer was also required to judge the household at the Day of Judgment. Thus the rite no longer witnesses against others in terms of their salvation, but one that has bearing on the missionary's own eternal responsibilities. This understanding has the potential of instilling within the missionary reluctance toward frequent performance, and perhaps relegating the rite to occasional use.

Another unique feature to this instruction is the mention of the condemned as worse off than the heathen. In the New Testament, the condemned are compared unfavorably to Sodom and Gomorrah, the two cities associated with inhospitality, thus connecting the inhospitable behavior of the household or town with the examples par excellence of inhospitality. But mention of "heathen" suggests that the rite is not to be associated with hospitality. The term *heathen* contrasts with *believer*. Thus, at least in this particular set of instructions, the rite is now associated with reception of the message and not hospitality, an important and striking change.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, we are told that when performed properly, the performer should experience joy and gladness. These two positive emotional results are found elsewhere in the scriptures, often denoting the emotional state of the righteous, particularly in their praise of God's delivering power and

presence, and can be contrasted with negative emotional responses such as a sense of vindication or the satisfaction of vengeance; if the latter are experienced, then one can expect the rite has failed.<sup>35</sup> This condition, coupled with the emphasis on the missionary's eternal responsibility as judge, suggests that the rite is not to be taken lightly, highlights the serious nature of missionary work in general, and hints at an understanding of missionary work that will reveal itself later.

*D&C 99:2–4.* Our next Doctrine and Covenants reference concerning this rite was recorded in August of 1832 in a revelation given to John Murdock, who is told prior to his missionary labors: “And who receiveth you receiveth me . . . and who receiveth you as a little child, receiveth my kingdom; and blessed are they, for they shall obtain mercy. And whoso rejecteth you shall be rejected of my Father and his house; and you shall cleanse [wash] your feet in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them.”

Not surprisingly, there are a number of elements similar to the earlier sets of instruction as well as elements of innovation. Perhaps the most striking innovation in this instruction is emphasis of the act as an act of cleansing and lack of any mention of shaking or wiping the dust off the feet, the original element of the rite. While mention of washing or cleansing the feet is found in four of the five Doctrine and Covenants instructions, the instruction in section 99 differs from the earlier references in that no mention is given of casting or shaking the dust off the feet. The absence of wiping or dusting and the substitution of washing for the purpose of cleansing suggests that the rite is no longer a response to a lack of hospitality but functions to cleanse the missionary. What the missionary needs to be cleansed from is not exactly clear, but from the surrounding text here, and more specifically in the last set of instructions still to be discussed, it would appear that the washing functions as an absolving of further responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the particular household. The similarities include no mention of the original rite, the dusting or wiping off of the feet; instead, sole focus is again on the cleansing nature of the rite. The private nature of the rite is emphasized and the physical separation between the performance of the rite and the geographical place of initial confrontation is again made explicit.

Another twist given to the rite in section 99 is the allusion to Matthew 18. As noted above, the instructions speak of reception and rejection, as we would expect with this rite, but the instructions then go on to declare that those who receive as a little child receive the kingdom. (It is unclear whether individuals are to receive Murdock as if he were a little child or whether they are to have the same qualities of a little child when receiving the missionary.) None of the New Testament instructions indicate the importance of reception with the qualities of a little child; this concept associated with reception is found in Matthew 18:3–6, which addresses the explicit question asked by Christ's disciples as to who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Christ declares that one must be converted and become as a little child; if not, one cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. This declaration is followed by the statement "and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

On the surface, this instruction appears to be about the sanctity of children, but as the next verse suggests, Christ is ultimately referring to believers: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (v. 6).<sup>36</sup> What makes this significant is the fact that Christ's instructions concerning receiving those who were as little children was not designated for nonbelievers, but instead was to act as a warning to the believers concerning their behavior with other believers.<sup>37</sup> This particular message to those "of the faith" also appears in section 121, where those who "have offended my little ones . . . shall be severed from the ordinances of mine house." In both passages, the instruction to receive "as a little child" or to receive the "little child" is, ultimately, instruction concerning the proper conduct between believers, not concerning the conduct between nonbeliever and believer.

But section 99 gives the impression that the allusion refers not to the conduct of the believer but to the conduct of the nonbeliever. It is unclear whether the household is expected to *be* as little children in their acceptance of the missionary or whether they are to *recognize* the childlike nature of said missionary. What is clear is that the household's reception of the missionary is now based on its ability to either recognize or possess

those childlike qualities, and that notion suggests that hospitality is no longer the primary element of reception.

The last verse of instruction addresses the rejection of the individual or household by God and “his house” if those individuals reject Murdock. Again, though this verse uses some hospitality language, it appears that the reception or rejection it is speaking of refers to the individual’s receiving or rejecting the *message*. For instance, we know from his personal journal that Murdock was offered hospitality by extended family on this mission, though their reception of the gospel message was less than satisfactory. Thus there is ambiguity as to what is meant by *rejection* or *receive*.

D&C 84:88–93. Though this reference comes before section 99 in terms of order within the Doctrine and Covenants, it was actually received in September of 1832, one month after the instruction to John Murdock, making it the last of our Doctrine and Covenants instructional references for the rite of dusting off the feet. It is also the most detailed of all the prescriptive ritual texts, both in the New Testament and in the Doctrine and Covenants, concerning this specific rite:

And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.

Whoso receiveth you receiveth me; and the same will feed you, and clothe you, and give you money.

And he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money, shall in nowise lose his reward.

And he that doeth not these things is not my disciple; by this you may know my disciples.

He that receiveth you not, go away from him alone by yourselves, and cleanse your feet even with water, pure water, whether in heat or in cold, and bear testimony of it unto your Father which is in heaven, and return not again unto that man.

And in whatsoever village or city ye enter, do likewise.

Nevertheless, search diligently and spare not; and wo unto that house, or that village or city that rejecteth you, or your words, or your testimony concerning me.

Surprisingly, in this reference the “receiving” is explicitly associated with specific hospitality responsibilities: feeding and providing clothing for the guest, as well as the more modern form of hospitality—providing funds. These responsibilities are reminiscent of those outlined in Christ’s sermon recorded in Matthew 25 describing the hospitable nature of the true Christian disciple.

The difficulty arises from the ambiguity of the term *disciple*. According to verse 91, the one who does “these things” (i.e., the feeding, clothing, and giving of money to the missionary) is a true disciple of Christ. Because this insight lies within a larger passage on missionary work, the reader may presume that a disciple, as defined in this section, may be a non-member, but if this is the case, it is the only reference to *disciple* in the Doctrine and Covenants that does refer to nonmembers.

There are twenty-one occurrences of the term *disciple* or *disciples* in the Doctrine and Covenants. Of these, twenty refer either to Church members directly or to believers in past dispensations (i.e., those in the New Testament), which suggests that the term is deliberately used to refer to those who have entered into the covenant relationship with God expressed in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In other words, the use of the term *disciple* in this section suggests that the instruction, or at least the part concerning reception, is directed not toward nonmembers but rather toward members in the outlying communities who are to take care of the missionaries. If this is the case, then the rite of cleansing the feet is to be performed not against households that reject the message but against member households that do not take care of the missionaries.

As for the rite itself, like in those instructions prior, most noticeable is the absence of wiping or dusting and the substitution of washing for the purpose of cleansing. Again, the cleansing appears to absolve the missionary of further responsibility for the spiritual welfare of that

particular household—though in this case, the household may very well consist of members themselves. Yet departing from the earlier instructions, the instructions in section 84 stipulate that one is to cleanse the feet with pure water, emphasizing the absolving and cleansing nature of the rite, and then bear testimony of it (either that the rite was performed or that the inhospitality was experienced). As with other modern innovations to the rite, the redundant nature of these two elements may point to a loss of the original symbolism, as those from the New Testament time period would have simply understood the inherent symbolic nature of the act.<sup>38</sup>

This instruction to wash and testify is followed by the injunction that the missionary who performs this rite is to never return to the household or city, leaving the fate of that household in the hands of God. Again, comprehension of this instruction is muddled since it is unclear if the instruction concerns nonmember receptivity or member responsibility. In either case, while the focus may appear to be on the household so affected, it is possible that this concept reflects the growing sense of missionary responsibility. The finality of this rite in the future salvation of the household or city is a sobering consequence of a missionary's agency. Similar to the other instruction in sections 60 and 75, the instruction of D&C 84 not only emphasizes the significance of the missionary's decision as a witness, but also is a reminder that the missionary is a judge. Thus it is not surprising to find the next part of the instruction emphasizing the need for the missionary to "search diligently and spare not."<sup>39</sup>

### **Joseph Smith's 1835 Letter to the Elders**

Though there are no more canonical texts mentioning this practice beyond these five references in the Doctrine and Covenants, there is at least one prescriptive text found in the writings of Joseph Smith that adds to our understanding of the rite. In a letter delivered to the elders of the Church in November 1835, Joseph described the responsibilities of missionaries in certain sociocultural relations, such as parent-child, husband-wife, and master-slave-servant:

It should be the duty of elders, when they enter into any house, to let their labors and warning voice, be unto the master of that house: and if he receive the gospel, then he may extend his influence to his wife also, with consent, that peradventure she may receive the gospel; but if a man receive not the gospel, but gives his consent that his wife may receive it, and she believes, then let her receive it. But if the man forbid his wife, or his children before they are of age, to receive the gospel, then it should be the duty of the elder to go his way and use no influence against him: and let the responsibility be upon his head—shake off the dust of thy feet as a testimony against him, and thy skirts shall then be clear of their souls. Their sins are not to be answered upon such as God hath sent to warn them to flee the wrath to come, and save themselves from this untoward generation. . . . It should be the duty of an elder, when he enters into a house to salute the master of that house, and if he gain his consent, then he may preach to all that are in that house, but if he gain not his consent, let him go not unto his slaves or servants, but let the responsibility be upon the head of the master of that house, and the consequences thereof; and the guilt of that house is no longer upon thy skirts: Thou art free; therefore, shake off the dust of thy feet, and go thy way.<sup>40</sup>

Written a little over three years after the last set of instructions in the Doctrine and Covenants, this instruction both clarifies and complicates elements of the canonical instructions. The instruction makes it clear that the concept of *reception* is now to be understood as reception of the gospel message, a definition hinted at in the Doctrine and Covenants but never explicitly outlined. Hospitality is not a factor at all. In terms of the rite itself, this instruction does not mention washing or cleansing; instead the rite is now simply described as “shak[ing] off the dust of thy feet.” In terms of purpose, we are told that the rite frees the performer from further responsibility concerning the spiritual welfare of the household. In fact, the rite expressly puts the responsibility on the head of the household: “If the man forbid his wife, or his children before they are of age, to receive

the gospel, then it should be the duty of the elder to go his way and use no influence against him: and let the responsibility be upon his head. . . . Their sins are not to be answered upon such as God hath sent to warn them.”

One new element to this instruction is the association of the rite with the metaphorical cleansing of the missionary’s clothing: “Shake off the dust of thy feet . . . and thy skirts shall be clear of their souls.” This statement suggests that the rite functions identically to another rite—that of shaking one’s clothes to denote the absolving of further responsibility ecclesiastically. Canonical texts concerning the shaking of clothing are few in number; yet they are all descriptive texts, and in all of them hospitality is not the issue, but instead the purpose of the physical act is for the performer to indicate that he is no longer responsible for the sinful state of the observers.<sup>41</sup> In Acts 18, during a confrontation with a group of blasphemous Jews, Paul “shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6). Similarly, Jacob declared in 2 Nephi 9:44: “Remember my words. Behold, I take off my garments, and I shake them before you; . . . wherefore, ye shall know at the last day, when all men shall be judged of their works, that the God of Israel did witness that I shook your iniquities from my soul, and that I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood.”<sup>42</sup>

In both of these references, the rite of shaking one’s garment is entirely concerned with the participant’s personal accountability as the audience’s ecclesiastical leader. Once the prophets have fulfilled their responsibility of declaring God’s word, the rite of shaking the clothing becomes a witness that they are clean of any consequences if the particular instruction is not kept. Only in the Pauline account is there any indication that the audience is antagonistic to the prophetic message; in fact, it is entirely possible that Jacob’s audience not only received the warning, but accepted both the prophet and his message and changed their own behavior accordingly. Joseph’s letter, which now explicitly ties reception to message instead of hospitality, demonstrates this change by associating the rite of dusting off feet with another similar, yet different, rite associated with absolving of guilt.

### **Summary: The D&C Instructions and Joseph Smith's Letter**

So what can be said about the rite of dusting off the feet in the Doctrine and Covenants and Joseph's 1835 letter? First, it would appear that one primary purpose of the rite is to provide continuity between the New Testament dispensation and the Restoration dispensation, even though the conditions of the performance of the rite (such as forms of footwear, what may be defined as hospitality, etc.) have changed. Second, there appears to be a growing understanding that the sole purpose of the rite is to denote absolving the performer of spiritual responsibility upon the rejection of the message culminating in the 1835 letter, regardless of whether hospitality has been offered, while at the same time establishing the serious responsibilities of the missionary to present the message. Yet this point is conditioned by the possibility that at least two of the five Doctrine and Covenants instructions were meant for members, and not nonmembers, concerning treatment of the missionaries.

The uncertainty concerning the intended recipient of the rite may also explain the uncertainty as to which type of act the rite itself is. In some instructions the rite is to be understood as a "cleansing"; another suggests it is a washing, whereas the instructions in the letter make no mention of the rite as cleansing or washing and merely state that one is to "shake off the dust." Coinciding with this is uncertainty as to the verbalizing of the testimony. Some instructions suggest that when the rite is performed the individual is to speak, while other instructions suggest that the rite itself may be seen as the testimony. All of this information suggests that there was no set form to the rite, with differences between recipients, purposes, and praxes, which, as we see in the letter, may actually lead to confusion with another rite that has a similar purpose.<sup>43</sup>

### **Nineteenth-Century Performances of Wiping Dust off the Feet**

Unlike the New Testament dispensation, since the Restoration we not only have the prescriptive texts concerning this rite as found in the scriptural canon, but we also have a number of descriptive texts represented in the personal journals from nineteenth-century missionaries which give us insight into how they practiced and understood the rite.<sup>44</sup>

While there is variety in the manner by which the rite is described in these texts, a pattern emerges as to how the individual missionaries thought about the rite. First and foremost, as one might expect, it is clear that the missionaries performed the rite when the gospel was not received by those they encountered, regardless of whether hospitality was offered. For instance, in John Murdock's missionary journal, he records: "We . . . labored from morning till noon endeavoring to get a chance to preach, but we were not successful. I was turned out of doors for calling on the wool-carder to repent. After dinner we took leave of the two ladies and the family with which we had dined and wiped our feet as a testimony against that city."<sup>45</sup> Though no mention is made as to whether or not he was "received," it would appear that common hospitality was enjoyed by the missionaries. Murdock explicitly mentions (1) that he was fed by at least one household and (2) that in another, even though he was eventually "turned out of doors," he had clearly been invited in originally (you cannot be turned out if you weren't invited in).<sup>46</sup> Yet, in terms of being able to preach, they were "unsuccessful" and thus wiped their feet against the city (including the two families that entertained them, presumably).

William E. McLellin, who records in his journals that he performed the rite no less than six times during his mission, recounts performing the rite after having been invited to speak before a Campbellite gathering. According to his account, they asked him to stop speaking, which he did after bearing his testimony, whereupon they then invited his companion to speak for ten minutes as well.<sup>47</sup> As in Murdock's account, the missionaries were given space and time to deliver the message. Neither missionary was cast out or not given a chance to speak; the audience simply did not accept the message.

Approximately fifty years later, Jesse Bennett recorded in his journal while on a mission to Samoa that in a particular village, the chief rejected the message but invited the missionaries to stay for breakfast, whereupon the elders read them "the words of the Savior, when you go from one city if they do not receive you flee to another." At this the local minister got upset and asked them to leave, which they did, and they "shook the dust off of [their] feet against them and went on [their] way rejoicing."<sup>48</sup> Similarly,

Sidney Ottley describes his experiences in New Zealand, where, in one particular village, they met three members of the Church and an “atheist who has been a great friend to the Elders for 16 yrs,” yet this did not deter them the next day from being “glad to shake [Wanganui’s] dust from [their] feet.”

One humorous account can be found in the journal of Ellis Seymour Heninger, who in 1900 recorded that as a missionary in the southern states he had been invited to spend an evening with acquaintances. The evening was apparently an enjoyable one, ending with ice cream and cake. The following morning, the elders went tracting in the suburbs of the same city and “shook the dust of [their] feet against the people”—again, presumably against those whose company they enjoyed the night before.<sup>49</sup>

In other accounts, performance of the rite appears to have been a reaction to disappointment. Oliver Huntington described the difficulties of finding an audience during early winter in 1849. According to his journal, the ground was covered in snow and it was extremely cold; thus no one was willing to listen to them outside nor were they successful in finding a room to preach. He writes that he and his companion decided to try the village again in warmer weather. He then states that he and his companion felt like shaking the dust off their feet but decided against it.

While these several accounts suggest that the rite was performed sometimes without much thought, but with the understanding that it was simply what one did following rejection, other journal entries depict the specific elder’s concern as to the appropriateness of the rite in the case of basic rejection. William Robinson, a missionary in Colorado, writes in his journal entry for November 28, 1897, that there was a lack of hospitality and a general disinterest in the gospel while on his mission in Colorado. However, he decided not to perform the rite: “Not a soul to hear us at either of the three meetings we appointed for to-day, yet we desire to be compassionate and instead of shaking the dust off our feet as a testimony against them we prefer to repeat those immortal words of the Master: ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’” Elder Nephi Pratt expressed similar misgivings in his 1906 conference report concerning the missionary labors in the Northwest: “We have oftentimes felt appalled at the indifference manifested in the larger cities . . . and have sometimes

thought that all had been done there, . . . but we had a doubt whether we ought to shake off the dust from our feet.”<sup>50</sup>

Thus from the journals themselves we can conclude that within the first century of the Church in this dispensation, the rite functioned primarily to signify those who had not received the message of the Restoration, whether hospitality was offered to the missionaries or not. Yet this rejection was not the only reason for doing so, for some elders the rite expressed their own disappointment or discouragement. There also seems to have been an undercurrent of uncertainty as to whether or not rejection merited the rite’s performance. In this we see a developing sense that missionary work may include more than one presentation, an approach that is simply taken for granted in modern missionary work but, as we noted before, may have been implicit with some of the Doctrine and Covenants instruction. Also significant is the fact that only two of the accounts reviewed by this author ever suggest that immediate results to the rite were expected following the performance—an outcome that is almost universally understood today.<sup>51</sup>

### **Shaking Dust off Feet in the Late Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries**

Following Joseph Smith’s letter of 1835, there does not appear to be any more official instruction concerning this rite, though there is a letter dated May 22, 1842, titled “An Epistle of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in Nauvoo, to the saints scattered abroad,” that concludes with the following instruction: “Brethren, with all these considerations before you, in relation to your afflictions, we think it expedient to admonish you, that you bear, and forbear, as becometh Saints, and having done all that is lawful and right, to obtain justice of those that injure you, wherein you come short of obtaining it, commit the residue to the just judgment of God, and shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony of having done so.” The letter is signed by the stake presidents and high council of Nauvoo, and not by the presiding quorum of the Church. Because it was published in *Times and Seasons*, of which Joseph Smith was the chief editor, one may presume it was at least

unofficially approved by the First Presidency. In the letter, those members who wished to gather with the Saints to Nauvoo but who were unable to do so are instructed as to what to do if threatened with loss of land or other economic means by those antagonistic toward the Church.<sup>52</sup>

Because the letter is not for missionaries, it is not surprising to find no reception terminology common to the other ritual texts described above; yet this aspect in and of itself is intriguing since all other references to this rite so far have been in the context of missionary work. Though texts describing actual performance are found overwhelmingly in missionary journals, this instruction suggests that the rite was understood as more than merely a missionary rite. It suggests that the rite could be used for cases of general persecution, particularly of a violent nature, of nontraveling members, and only as a last resort; in these cases reception of the gospel message is tangential, if at all important. Unfortunately, examples of shaking the dust off one's feet for the purpose of general persecution outside of the missionary field are quite rare, so it is unknown how common this specific form of practice was in the early Church period.<sup>53</sup>

Following this instruction, nothing more is known until 1899, when correspondence between Ben E. Rich, then president of the Southern States Mission, and the First Presidency via George Reynolds suggests that Church leadership believed wholesale practice of the rite in the Southern States Mission was not necessary. In February 1899, President Rich wrote to the First Presidency asking for advice. According to his letter, President Rich stated that a letter from one of the conference presidents was being circulated in the Southern States mission. The letter instructed the missionaries to close individual counties by washing their feet against the given county and then recording when, at which stream, and by whom the rite was performed. President Rich, on the other hand, was concerned about performing the rite indiscriminately as was often done in the past and therefore wrote to Reynolds hoping for a response from the First Presidency.<sup>54</sup>

Responding to this letter, Reynolds stated (presumably with the authority of the First Presidency behind him), "If an elder feels that he has just cause and is moved upon by the spirit of God to wash his feet against a person or persons who have violently or wickedly rejected the

truth, let him do so quietly and beyond noting it in his journal let him not make it public.” While the rite was still performed for the sake of rejection (as a washing), this marks the first known time that the rite being performed under the influence of the Spirit is mentioned, and the text explicitly associates violent behavior of the nonmember with a consequent performance—though the violence is explicitly expressed in the rejection of the message, not as violent removal of property, as suggested in the 1842 letter. In keeping with earlier instruction, the rite was to be performed in private and there is no sense that the rite was to have any immediate effect on the situation or environment.

While the Rich-Reynolds correspondence suggests that the First Presidency was revising the way they understood the rite in both performance and meaning, it was not until 1915, with the publication of *Jesus the Christ* by James E. Talmage, that a “public” statement was made. Though the study did not claim to represent the official voice of the First Presidency, Talmage’s ecclesiastical authority and secular excellence gave the work quasi-canonical status.<sup>55</sup> In one of the footnotes, Talmage addresses the rite in the following manner:

To ceremonially shake the dust from one’s feet as a testimony against another was understood by the Jews to symbolize a cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow. It became an ordinance of accusation and testimony by the Lord’s instructions to His apostles as cited in the text. In the current dispensation, the Lord has similarly directed His authorized servants to so testify against those who willfully and maliciously oppose the truth when authoritatively presented (see Doc. and Cov. 24:15; 60:15; 75:20; 84:92; 99:4). The responsibility of testifying before the Lord by this accusing symbol is so great that the means may be employed only under unusual and extreme conditions, as the Spirit of the Lord may direct.<sup>56</sup>

While the purpose behind his study was to explore the life and ministry of Christ, Talmage utilized the revelations found in the Doctrine

and Covenants as well. It is also clear that this interpretation differs in significant ways from the canonical forms. As he often did throughout his book, Talmage gave comparative contextual material, in this case concerning the rite of shaking the dust off one's feet. Unfortunately, he did not also provide the bibliographical data to the Jewish sources; thus it is unclear whether or not these sources did in fact say what Talmage said they did (a "cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow"). Thus his contextual commentary cannot be understood as particularly useful in understanding the rite.

Of greater value is the manner by which he describes the rite using latter-day sources and terminology. It is in Talmage's description that the rite is first described as an ordinance, the term used by Latter-day Saints to describe formal ritual behavior enacted under the authority and power of the priesthood, primarily for those rituals necessary for salvation.<sup>57</sup> Thus, even though the priesthood is not mentioned anywhere in Talmage's text or in any of the canonical ones, by naming the rite as an ordinance, the performance of the rite becomes one of the ritualized ways to exercise the priesthood.

Moreover, his commentary concerning the rite appears to reflect an amalgam of the purpose for the rite as found in the 1842 letter for non-missionaries and the 1899 First Presidency letter for missionaries. The note arises within the context of the Christ's instructions to his disciples prior to their missionary labors, but the purpose of the rite, as explained in the footnote, is not in response to hospitality or rejection but to malicious opposition to the missionary work. Talmage, apparently following the lead of the First Presidency in the 1899 letter, also suggests that the rite should be used rarely, "under unusual and extreme conditions" and only "when the Spirit of the Lord dictates," though what constitutes "unusual and extreme" is left undefined, reflecting the same ambiguity concerning appropriateness as the letter does. Regardless of the challenges, Talmage's commentary may well be the most recognized text within LDS literature concerning the rite of wiping dust off the feet. As we shall see, its influence can certainly be felt in twentieth-century texts concerning the rite.

### Shaking Dust off Feet since Elder Talmage's Time

In the twentieth century, discussion of wiping dust off the feet has fallen into three categories. The first of these are statements made by General Authorities, which may be found in either public addresses or published works. Such texts are quite rare. In fact, over the past century and a half only three references to the rite have been mentioned in a general conference setting. The first, though technically in the nineteenth century, was in an 1899 general conference talk by John Taylor, who paraphrased the New Testament texts in a larger context of missionary work.<sup>58</sup> The second was the address by Nephi Pratt reporting on the Northwest Mission, mentioned earlier. Finally, in April 1968, Elder S. Dilworth Young mentioned the performance of this rite when describing the role of witnessing by the Quorum of the Seventy. Unfortunately, it is unclear as to whether he was describing an ongoing practice, the actual responsibilities of the Seventy, or earlier missionary experiences, or if, in fact, his mention is a critique of the practice.<sup>59</sup>

There are also in this first category a few comments made by General Authorities in their own studies. J. Reuben Clark Jr. addressed the rite in his book *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, focusing on the manner by which the rite absolved one from the sins of the other.<sup>60</sup> He also suggested that the ability to perform the rite is a key of the priesthood. Joseph Fielding Smith addressed the rite in his study *Church History and Modern Revelation* and mentioned that performance of the rite cleanses the missionary of the "blood" of the wicked.<sup>61</sup> John A. Widtsoe also mentioned the rite in his study *Priesthood and Church Government* under the chapter concerning missionary work, though he provided no commentary on it and simply quoted Joseph Smith's 1835 letter.<sup>62</sup> Bruce R. McConkie also addressed this rite in both *Mormon Doctrine* and his New Testament studies, such as the *Mortal Messiah*. His comments were brief and similar to those of Talmage, emphasizing the role of the Spirit in determining whether or not the rite should be performed.

The difficulty lies in trying to discern whether or not these sources reflect official Church stances. Both Smith's and Widtsoe's studies became manuals of instruction for priesthood meetings, but texts by

non-Apostles were also used and approved by the First Presidency prior to correlation for Church classroom material. In terms of official texts by the Church, no instruction appears to have been provided except for that found in the canon and Joseph Smith's letter.<sup>63</sup>

The second category of discussion is that found in Latter-day Saint scriptural commentaries, predominantly those about the Doctrine and Covenants, of which the first was Hyrum Smith and Janne Sjodahl's series published in 1927, which relied on the same supposed Jewish tradition references by Talmage for the contextualization of the rite.<sup>64</sup> While there are a number of commentaries spanning the past century, the majority of them rely on the words of the General Authorities mentioned above, predominantly Smith's *Church History and Modern Revelation* and Talmage's insights, as well as Smith's and Sjodahl's commentary (which indirectly appears to be utilizing Talmage).<sup>65</sup> These generally repeat the same understanding (the necessity of having the Spirit, the rareness of actual performance, and the nondifferentiation between wiping dust off one's feet and shaking clothing), but more recent commentaries have begun to emphasize that priesthood keys, and therefore specific priesthood authority, are necessary to perform the rite.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, this rite is described in anecdotal accounts most often related in the missionary field.<sup>67</sup> Of the two anecdotal collections used for this study, all anecdotes were secondhand accounts that missionaries were told about in the mission field and never performed or experienced themselves.<sup>68</sup> Though the specific locations are different, the elements of the accounts are similar. Stressed in each are the serious and unique nature of the performance, the almost immediate destructive consequence on the building or city, and most importantly the importance of being led by the Spirit. Many of these accounts suggest that only a mission president or General Authority can perform the rite, though this may be a result of the relative lateness of the collections (both gathered in the early 1980s) and thus reflect the growing trend within the commentaries in associating the role of priesthood and priesthood keys to performance.

One particular element of these anecdotes is worth mentioning, and that is the belief in immediacy of result. In all of the secondary accounts,

within days or weeks of the performance, the specific residence, business, community, or town was destroyed.<sup>69</sup> This observation represents a striking contrast with the actual performance accounts of nineteenth-century missionaries, since in the latter it does not appear that the missionaries expected immediate destruction.<sup>70</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, the rite underwent striking changes in terms of form (emergence of the priesthood as essential to performance), purpose (lack of association with hospitality or even rejection, but rather willful, malicious persecution), and effect (immediate destruction versus future condemnation), to the point that the rite does not resemble either the canonical instructions in the New Testament or the Doctrine and Covenants or actual nineteenth-century practice.

### Conclusion

So what are we to make of this rite? As demonstrated above, the rite of wiping off the dust from the feet of an individual has a long, rich history noted by significant changes reflecting new cultural mores. While the rite began in Late Antiquity Palestine, arising from preexisting rites of hospitality, and was used to denote not just the rejection of the gospel message but the inhospitality that the missionary may experience, it emerged in this dispensation as one way to demonstrate continuity between the New Testament dispensation and the Restoration. Similar to its New Testament predecessor, it was predominantly a mission field ritual, yet cultural differences changed the form, praxis, and purpose of the rite. For instance, latter-day instruction that the rite be performed in private lest it offend others differs dramatically from the instruction in Luke 10 in which those who are not received are to go out into the street and declare their rejection while performing the act publicly. The rite also changed as the Church's understanding of how missionary work would be engaged grew.

The original missionary strategy, both in the New Testament and in the early part of this dispensation, was to go into a city or town, minister, and then move on to the next city without returning. In such cases, the rite of dusting off feet makes sense as it both conveys the judgment for

those who rejected the message and acts as a witness that the missionary could do no more for the people. Yet early on, the Church established permanent missionary field headquarters with missionaries rotating in and out, meaning that a "one and done" approach to missionary work would not suffice. In other words, missionary work in a given area was now seen as an ongoing experience with multiple missionary companionships and the conversion of an individual being an ongoing process, not one limited by an initial rejection of the message, thus eliminating the need for a rite such as the dusting off of feet. As the documents show, some missionaries were beginning to question the necessity of this rite, even when the rite was understood as a response to persecution, an early twentieth-century innovation; it has since become ineffectual as the Church's response to persecution has been to view such as simply a greater missionary opportunity.

Yet even though the culture both inside the Church and outside in the mission field has been changing to the extent that the actual practice of this rite is no longer necessary, the rite has continued to have an impact on missionaries. As noted above, though none of the late twentieth-century missionaries mentioned performed the rite themselves, they all knew of a performance in detail, having had the account transmitted to them by older missionaries in the mission field. This oral telling of the practice, even if the account is fiction, can have a ritual-like outcome, specifically a greater communal sense of solidarity among the missionaries.

In most cases, missionaries are placed in new, foreign environments, meeting individuals they have never known. For many, this is their first real time away from home for an extended period of time, which can be an unnerving experience. The formalized structure of the missionaries' daily agenda provides an infrastructure by which they may define themselves within the new environment. Central to this arrangement is their relationship to other missionaries and the history of the mission itself, as both establish the value of the missionary's experience. The transmission of accounts concerning the wiping of dust off one's feet emphasizes the power missionaries have to bring about change, reminding the missionary that God is watching over him or her, while at the

same time reinforcing the need for obedience to the formalized structure of missionary life. Moreover, since each account is placed in a specific geographical setting within the mission area, the stories provide a sense of control over an unknown, and potentially dangerous, environment. All of these elements empower the missionaries, thereby making them more effective in their role.

But the rite may have significance beyond the mission field as an example of just how innovative our ritual practice is. The manner in which the dusting off of the feet has changed from one dispensation to another, even within one dispensation, demonstrates that ritual reflects changing cultural environments and needs. By understanding its origin and its transformation in terms of performance and function, the rite of wiping the dust off one's feet may be a model by which we can examine the other, more prominent ritual behavior in which we as Latter-day Saints engage and, in so doing, gain even greater appreciation and understanding as to who we are and what we are meant to do.

### Notes

1. All biblical quotes are taken from the King James Version.
2. The number of New Testament commentaries that refer back to the Jewish explanation are too many to list here, though this explanation can be found in commentaries one hundred years old as well as those that have been published within the past ten years. For a partial list, see T. J. Rogers, "Shaking the Dust off the Markan Mission Discourse," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 2 (2004): 169–92, particularly 180. Some LDS commentaries have included this explanation in their own explanations; for instance, see Hoyt W. Brewster, *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 513: "Ancient missionaries shook the dust from their feet against those who rejected the gospel, for they 'were to be considered as pagans with whom the Jews held no social intercourse. Even the dust of their dwellings and their cities, was to be treated as defilement, necessitating a cleansing.'" Brewster is quoting directly from Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1923), 126.
3. Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19*, Biblical Interpretation Series 10 (New York: Brill, 1995), 155: "In nomadic societies of the ancient Middle East hospitality to a stranger was a sacred obligation, a manifestation of social graciousness

that touches the deepest values. . . . The guest is sacred and it is an honor to provide for him. . . . Jewish theology developed the consciousness of hospitality providing the possibility of expiating sins (Barakhot 55a; Sanhedrin 103), a notion that Jesus himself touches on in the house of Simon.” For more on ancient Near Eastern hospitality, see Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005); Jean-Jacques Glassner, “L’hospitalité en Mésopotamie ancienne: aspect de la question de l’étranger,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 80, no. 1 (1990): 60–75; Michael Herzfeld, “‘As in Your Own House’: Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society,” in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 75–89; T. R. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament and the ‘Teleological Fallacy,’” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 26, no. 1 (2001): 3–30; Scott Morschauser, “‘Hospitality,’ Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1–9,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27, no. 4 (2003): 461–85; Robert C. Stallman, “Divine Hospitality in the Pentateuch: A Metaphorical Perspective on God as Host” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1999).

4. Hospitality from an ancient Near Eastern perspective differs from our modern understanding of hospitality. While we tend to associate hospitality with service, or selfless acts by one party, rendered because of the individual’s moral or ethical stance, ancient hospitality required reciprocity between the two parties to transform the unknown and therefore dangerous into a recognizable and therefore controllable state. In other words, hospitality was not expected to be a selfless act on the part of the host, but a ritualized process by which the guest is introduced into the family structure and rendered harmless, subjugated to the authority of the host. For a greater critique of this principle, see Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 1–4; see also Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament.”
5. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament,” 11: “As a guest, a stranger is in a liminal phase, and may infringe upon the guest/host relationship: by insulting the host through hostility or rivalry; by usurping the role of the host; by refusing what is offered. On the other hand, the host may infringe: by insulting the guest through hostility or rivalry; by neglecting to protect the guest and his/her honor; by failing to attend to one’s guests, to grant precedence, to show concern.” It should be pointed out that hospitality also played an important role in the Book of Mormon to facilitate movement from stranger to household member. In Alma 8, for instance, the hospitality displayed by Amulek as he “receives” Alma leads Alma to bless Amulek and his entire household and then remain in the household for days. This hospitality is later

reciprocated, when following their missionary labors in Ammonihah, Alma takes Amulek into his own house (see Alma 8:19–22; 15:16–18).

6. Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel: 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 85: “In the world of the Bible, people would bathe their entire body, as well as simply wash their face, hands or feet. To some extent bathing and washing were understood as part of personal hygiene. Feet get dusty, so it was customary to provide water for guests to wash their own feet. But to a greater extent bathing and washing signified a change in social status. Hosts washed the feet of strangers to signify that they were now completely in the care and under the protection of their household.”
7. Jo Ann Hackett, “Violence and Women’s Lives in the Book of Judges,” *Interpretation* 58, no. 4 (2004): 356–64: “The complex interweaving of these stories throughout the book of Judges argues for an underlying system of meaning that sees in women’s bodies a substitute for a unified Israel” (p. 364). See also Athalya Brenner, “Introduction,” in *Judges, A Feminist Companion to the Bible* 4, series 2, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 13: “Violence against women is routinely considered or committed, probably as an extended hyperbole symbolic of the disintegrating social order.” Many have noted the mistreatment as an essential part of the literary structure of the book, used to demonstrate the increasing depravity and lack of community experienced by Israel. See also Don Michael Hudson, “Living in a Land of Epithets: Anonymity in Judges 19–21,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19, no. 62 (1994): 49–66, who explores the growing anonymity of the characters, specifically women, as the book progresses. As a literary technique used to further suggest Israel’s disintegration as a society, “anonymity gives the implicit impression that every individual within Israel was dangerous because every individual was doing right in his or her own eyes. . . . By viewing the anonymity of the concubine the reader gets the impression that ‘every’ concubine from Dan to Beersheba could be raped, murdered and dismembered. . . . The anonymity of the characters assumes and characterizes the universality of the wickedness of the abusers and the dismemberment of the victims in that society. Anonymity disintegrates individuality to depict universal dismemberment. . . . From the independent, powerful women in the beginning of the book (Achsa, Deborah) who participated in the division of the land and the protection of the tribes, the narrative has spiraled down to portray nameless women who are divided by the tribes” (p. 60–61). See also Daniel I. Block, “Unspeakable Crimes: The Abuse of Women in the Book of Judges,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (1998): 46–55.
8. The relationship between substitution and hospitality is also found in 2 Samuel 10, with the death of the Ammonite king, in which David sends

two servants as a sign of respect to the newly appointed king, Hanun. Upon their arrival, the counselors of the new king recommend ritually humiliating the messengers, which they do by shaving off half of their beards and cutting their clothing down to the waist and sending them away. David, upon hearing of the humiliating inhospitality displayed, promptly gathers his army and marches to war, soundly defeating the inhospitable Ammonites. In this case, the messengers are not individuals acting of their own accord but represent the one who sent them, and any action taken against them or on their behalf symbolically reflects on the sender. Thus inhospitality against them is inhospitality against David. John T. Greene, *The Role of Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East: Oral and Written Communication in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures: Communications and Communiqués in Context* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 42: “Messengers are ‘extensions’ of one’s power and will.” See also Susan Niditch, *“My Brother Esau Is a Hairy Man”: Hair and Identity in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 98: “The action of the Ammonites incenses King David, for the emissaries are an extension of his person and his power, and he goes to war and roundly defeats the Ammonites.”

9. Because of the social nature of ritual, reciprocity often plays an important role in ritual behavior. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 100–101: “Perhaps the most significant form of social interaction in the limited-good world of the first century is an informal principle of reciprocity, a sort of implicit, nonlegal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one’s sense of honor and shame. . . . For example, the acceptance of an invitation to supper, of a small gift, or a benefaction like healing was equivalent to a positive challenge requiring a response. It signaled the start of an ongoing reciprocal relationship. To accept an invitation, a gift, or a benefaction with no thought to future reciprocity implies acceptance of imbalance in society.” For more on the importance of reciprocity in the social kinship structure of Hellenistic Palestine, see Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); and Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 17–20. This reciprocity can be seen in LDS ritual behaviors, both formal and informal. An example of formal reciprocity are those rituals associated with the temple; an informal ritual tradition is the shaking of all the individuals’ hands after having been confirmed, ordained, or set apart.
10. Hospitality may lie at the core of other principles in Christ’s teachings. For example, in Matthew 7 the sequence of ask, seek, and knock ends with the promise that the one who knocks shall be answered or, in other words, received into the house. This perspective is further elucidated when the

imagery of knocking is applied to Christ as the stranger as in Revelation 3:20: “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” In this reference the foundation of hospitality is clear—receiving Christ is actually inviting him into the home and providing a meal for him.

11. The role of honor will not be discussed in any great detail in this paper, but honor and shame are integral to the importance of hospitality. See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 27–51. See also Herzfeld, “As in Your Own House,” mentioned earlier. Herzfeld’s piece is part of a larger collection of studies all concerning honor and shame in the Mediterranean culture.
12. The term here for “part” (*mēros*) can mean both a designated geographical area as well as a particular set of circumstances that defines a person at any given time and as such is used at least once to refer to the place and state that one experiences following judgment. See also Matthew 24:51 and Luke 12:46, which translate *mēros* as “portion.”
13. Arland J. Hultgren, “The Johannine Footwashing (13.1–11) as Symbol of Eschatological Hospitality,” in *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 4 (1982): 539–46: “It is clear that in the present text of the Fourth Gospel the footwashing has a soteriological significance (13.8b), and that being ‘clean’ (13.10–11) is a prerequisite for salvation. But it would be incorrect to conclude that the footwashing represents a form of cultic washing or purification.” Christ himself suggests that the rite is not to be viewed as a rite of purity.
14. The Joseph Smith Translation includes the following conclusion to the verse: “Now this was the custom of the Jews under their law; wherefore, Jesus did this that the law might be fulfilled.” This addition suggests that what Christ was doing was not unique but was commonly recognized as part of the law of Moses. Unfortunately, it is unclear which specific instruction found in the law of Moses is being referenced or even which washing the commentary refers to (i.e., is it the washing of feet that Christ is performing, or the washing of hands and feet?). In Exodus 30:19–21, we are told that Aaron and his sons, as priests, are to wash hands and feet prior to service in the tabernacle so that they do not die. Yet other than this injunction to the priests, no mention is made of Israelites being required to wash feet outside of the norms of hospitality. In light of this, it is possible that the priestly injunction may also be referencing hospitality rites. The laver is consecrated unto God, even anointed by God’s representative, and thus may represent the water that the host provides for his guests.
15. This may have had some impact on the later Greco-Roman convert who would have known the classic Greek narratives of gods visiting unawares. That these traditions were still known and believed is witnessed in Acts 14,

where the city of Lycaonia mistook Barnabus and Paul to be Jupiter and Mercury (Zeus and Hermes), two Greek deities who were often found in disguise bestowing blessings on the hospitable and leaving curses behind on the inhospitable. For more information, see Adelbert Denaux, “The Theme of Divine Visits and Human (In)hospitality in Luke–Acts: Its Old Testament and Greco-Roman Antecedents,” *The Unity of Luke–Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1999), 255–79.

16. Even the commandment to love one another may reflect hospitality responsibilities. In Deuteronomy 10:18–19, Moses describes God as one who “loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” This image of God as the hospitable host is the reason behind the commandment to Israel to love the stranger: “Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Back in John 13:34, the commandment to love one another is followed by Christ using himself as a template to demonstrate that love—“as I have loved you.” If one equates demonstrating love with hospitality, as God himself does in Deuteronomy 10, then it is possible that the phrase “as I have loved you” refers to the act of the feet washing, a rite that connotes acceptance and place within the household. In both cases, it is about accepting the other, the stranger, a lesson that the disciples will need to have learned and internalized approximately fifty days later.
17. Andrew Skinner, *Gethsemane* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 41: “Jesus instituted the ordinance of the washing of the feet as ‘a holy and sacred rite, one performed by the saints in the seclusion of their temple sanctuaries,’ according to Elder Bruce R. McConkie (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:708). It appears to be an ordinance of ultimate approbation by the Lord and, in a fascinating way, stands in direct contrast to the ordinance of wiping dust off the feet, which seems to be the ultimate earthly ordinance of condemnation by the Lord, performed only by his authorized servants.”
18. This Greek term is used throughout the Greco-Roman era and is recognized as one of the primary words used to describe hospitality, specifically the act of welcoming the guest into the home. See Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 54, 93, 130–31, 188. See also Denaux, “The Theme,” 257: “According to Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida the notions of ‘visit’, ‘welcome, receive’, and ‘show hospitality’, belong to the semantic domain of ‘Association.’ . . . The notion of ‘welcome, receive’ can be expressed by . . . dexo-mai.” *Greek-English Lexicon of the Greek New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, New York, 1988.
19. The term is used throughout the letters of Paul and of the other Apostles to describe their physical reception by the church communities as well as reception of the message (see Acts 2:17; 2 Corinthians 7:15; 11:4; Galatians 4:14; Philippians 4:18; Colossians 4:10; Hebrews 11:31; and 3 John 1:9–10).

20. Speaking particularly of this ambiguity as found in Mark's text, T. J. Rogers states: "Some scholars have chosen to favor one part over the other. . . . This bias toward one to the exclusion of the other is as unnecessary as it is undesirable. In all likelihood, these are not two separate types of rejection, but one and the same. For the evangelist there is no significant difference between refusing to offer hospitality and refusing to hear the gospel of Christ. But this functional similarity should not obscure the rhetorical distinction that accounts for the inclusion of the two parts. The rejection of hospitality is the focus, since it is mentioned prior to the reference to the refusal to hear the message. Also, the greater context of the passage, particularly the immediately preceding verse (6.10), which discusses hospitality explicitly, suggests where the evangelist's main concern lies." "Shaking the Dust," 179. Unfortunately, he does not address the even more ambiguous texts of Luke, which say nothing of hearing the word at all.
21. Rogers, "Shaking the Dust," 182, again using the Markan text, states: "The dust-shaking serves as a testimony, as evidence that hospitality had not been offered. Had the twelve entered the town and been extended hospitality, as v. 10 [Mark 6:10] directs, they would have been admitted into a house and their feet would have been washed according to custom. Thus, they would have been without dust on their feet to shake. However, any town not offering hospitality would likewise not wash the feet of the apostles. Accordingly, upon leaving, their feet would remain soiled from the dust of the road, which, when shaken off, serves as evidence that hospitality was not offered. Thematically, this solution fits the best of any hitherto proposed. The preceding context sets up the mission as one that requires hospitality as a factor for success (vv. 8–9), and then explicitly presents this arrangement in the imperative (v. 10). Following this, the protasis of v. 11 introduces a condition where the twelve are refused hospitality. In natural thematic sequence, the apodosis too should pertain to matters of hospitality, specifically the consequence of refusing to offer it."
22. The same pattern can be seen in the ritual of the Latter-day Saint sacrament, which may also be seen through the lens of hospitality. In 1 Corinthians 11:29, Paul states that one who "eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Similarly, when instituting the sacrament in the New World, Christ himself warns of partaking of the sacrament unworthily: "And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul" (3 Nephi 18:28–29). The angel who spoke to King Benjamin associated drinking damnation with partaking of the cup of the wrath of God; thus the sacrament is either a rite in which one may attain a

- spiritual state in which the Spirit is always present or one in which the drink becomes the cup of God's wrath.
23. See also Weston W. Fields, "Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 231* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 158: "From the evaluation of Sodom as the prototype of divine judgment it follows that the actions of the Sodomites are archetypal instances of wickedness, especially with reference to (a) overbearing arrogance, inhospitality, and lack of compassion for the socially weak and disadvantaged."
  24. Letellier, *Day in Mamre*, 158: "The violation of social norms in the attack on Lot's house and the integrity of his guests (with the intended sexual violation of course inflaming the situation) is already a radical disruption of order in the social fabric. . . . The nature and limits of the rights of sojourners in the ancient Orient are still not well understood, but H. Brunner has pointed out by reference to ch. 22 of the Insinger Papyrus of the Ptolomaic period that these rights in Egypt could be frighteningly fragile. A sojourner could expect to be roughly received by the local populace, could be cursed, rejected and even subjected to the 'crime of women' (Egyp. *btw n shnt*) which means the crime of violating a man as if he was a woman (ie. sodomy) for which no redress was possible." In these circumstances, both the violation and the homosexual nature of the rape become less sexual sins per se as manifestations of social violence and hatred in which a helpless traveler is brutalized by a local community in a gratuitous act of rejection and humiliation." See also J. A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1990), 37: "The fact that Lot is prepared to surrender his virgin daughters rather than his guests to the lust of the mob suggest that the emphasis is on the social aspect of their sin and not on the sexual aspect itself. . . . The Sodomites are engaging in an anti-social act of violence and oppression. It is not for nothing that this is expressed in the motif of perverse sex. This is not only to show that the Sodomites wanted to 'humiliate' and 'demasculinize' the guests. The Sodomites make natural intercourse impossible by violating the social fibre of the community as represented by the motif of hospitality." Demasculinization and inhospitality are also present in the narrative concerning David's envoys to the Ammonites; see Niditch, *My Brother Esau*, 98: "The shaved beard and the ripped robe are potent symbols; the Israelites will not allow themselves to be unmannered or overpowered; that they are mere women is, on the other hand, precisely the message that the ill-fated Ammonites sought to send."
  25. Prescriptive texts are numerous in the scriptures. Most of the book of Leviticus, for instance, is made up of prescriptive texts. Though highly detailed, Leviticus 1 does not detail how bloody or messy the rite of animal sacrifice

- is, nor does it detail how long before the items begin to decay, and so forth. Prescriptive texts are difficult to interpret as they more often reflect the ideal of the writers or redactors and not necessarily the manner in which the society in question actually practiced or understood the ritual. For this reason, descriptive texts are helpful in determining meaning as we see the rituals put into actual, historical practice. An example of the difference between the two types is Leviticus 1–8 (prescriptive) and Leviticus 9 (descriptive).
26. Ritual can actually be described textually as one of three types: (1) prescriptive, or an idealized description of prescribed ritual behavior, (2) descriptive, or a description of an actual ritual event, and (3) a fictional passage describing a nonreal ritual event. While the third textual type is not often found in the scriptures, we will encounter this form later on in the paper.
  27. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 140, 143: “Inhospitality shown to the traveling apostles appears to represent both a moral lapse as well as a rejection of the message and ministry of Jesus. These apostles are functioning as emissaries of Jesus. They carry out their mission by the authority and power that Jesus grants to them. Thus, when potential hosts reject these men, they are simultaneously rejecting the one who sent them as well as the message they bring. The rejection of Jesus, his apostles, his message, and his ministry, then function as a testimony against these inhospitable people. When Jesus’ apostles experience rejection and inhospitality, they are supposed to wipe the very dust off their feet that should have been washed off if their potential hosts had taken the appropriate actions and made sure the travelers’ feet were washed (9.5). . . . Jesus instructs his disciples to protest a community’s inhospitality in the city streets by wiping the dust from their feet that would have accumulated during their travels. At that point, the dust functions as evidence that the townspeople have not acted properly. If they had properly received Jesus’ disciples, the townspeople would have washed this dust off of their guest’s feet.”
  28. Christian hospitality is still a subject of interest today. For more on this subject, see John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness amid Moral Diversity* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); and Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).
  29. For a comprehensive look at the changing role of hospitality in England, see Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
  30. D&C 132:46–47: “And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in

- my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven. And again, verily I say, whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord; for I, the Lord, am thy God.”
31. Another definition is that of Gregory A. Prince, *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1995), 107–8: “Not to be confused with profanity, the ordinance of cursing consisted of a formal act with the intent of causing an adverse effect on an individual or group.”
  32. Richard D. Draper, “*Hubris and Ate: A Latter Day Warning from the Book of Mormon*,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 2 (1994): 12–33: “Both the Old and New Testaments testify to the reality and power of God’s curse. Do not be misled into thinking a curse is something that it is not. Too often a cursing is seen as activating some kind of destructive force—some hex, spell, or enchantment which, by virtue of a supernatural nexus of operation, brings harm to its recipient. Nothing could be further from the truth. A ‘curse’ denotes something delivered up to divine wrath and dedicated to destruction. . . . God’s curse does not consist of divine action but rather of divine inaction. When a people sin to the point that judgment must come, destruction results; but it comes because of the removal of God’s Spirit, prophets, and restraining hand.”
  33. Yet even this similarity differs slightly. The Lukan text suggests that a blessing was to be placed on the house upon entrance and before other hospitality elements were experienced, not after the reception has been provided.
  34. The term “heathen” shows up three times in the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 45:54; 75:22; 90:10). In all three references, the term appears to refer to those who do not possess the gospel message. In the 1800s the term also connoted non-Christians. Whether or not the term as used in all of the Doctrine and Covenants texts should be understood in this manner is unclear.
  35. For more on ritual failure, see Ute Hüsken, ed., *When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007); and Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 199–205.
  36. Most New Testament scholars view “little ones” in Matthew 18:6 as a reference to disciples or believers. See, for instance, Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 214–15: “Near the beginning of the fourth discourse in chapter 18 Matthew returns to the same Marcan passage (18.6 = Mark 9.42), and once again it is clear that οἱ μικροί [little ones] are disciples. And just a few verses later in 18.10 and 14 (Matthew’s version of the parable of the lost sheep) there are two further redactional uses of the phrase. So there can be

little doubt that for Matthew οἱ μικροί is a quite specific term for disciples.” See also R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 680–82.

37. The entire discourse of Matthew 18 is to be understood as instruction to disciples concerning the relationship to other disciples, particularly weaker or newly converted disciples. See France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 682: “To lead a person into sin is one means of causing them to ‘stumble,’ but their life and development as disciples may equally be damaged by discouragement or unfair criticism, by a lack of pastoral care, or by the failure to forgive which will be highlighted in vv. 21–35. The ‘despising’ of the little ones in v. 10 is the attitude which promotes such damaging behavior toward them. . . . Verses 6–7 contemplated the possibility of a ‘little one’ being caused to stumble and so lost from the life of discipleship. . . . The point is made explicitly in vv. 10 and 14 by emphasizing how much every single ‘little one’ matters to God, and therefore should matter also to fellow disciples. . . . Whereas vv. 8–9 were expressed in the singular, the appeal here is to the disciples corporately; the disciple community should not merely be made up of caring individuals, but should be a caring body, with a corporate pastoral concern for the problems faced by each individual.”
38. Ritual often has built-in redundancy, part of which has to do with the inherent danger of ritual situations. Because ritual plays a functional role in establishing, maintaining, or dissolving social relations, ritualized environments are often characterized by the loosening of social boundaries, which may result in inappropriate behavior and violation of social norms. Thus the purpose of the ritual or its meaning is repeated in various ways within the ritual experience. For example, the dedication of the tabernacle, as described in Exodus 40, is reinforced not only in a series of physical acts (the washing and anointing and offering of sacrifice as found in Leviticus 9:1–11) but also in the clothing itself and in changes of scent from one state to another. All of these acts have the same general purpose—to denote the transforming nature of the tabernacle.
39. The individual accounts of this are numerous, but many of the early Saints did not necessarily accept the restored gospel on their first encounter. Instead it took repeated visits from missionaries. This, in itself, is intriguing since multiple visits by different sets of missionaries suggests that individuals may in fact get more than one chance to accept the message, thereby negating the “one and done” approach to missionary work.
40. Joseph Smith, “Letter to the Elders of the Church,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (November 1835): 209–12. This letter is often quoted as it explains well the responsibilities of missionaries, but intriguingly, the paragraph concerning the rite is often left out. For example, it is missing in Alma P. Burton’s

*Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977) and in Donald Q. Cannon and Larry Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997).

41. Many LDS commentaries include Nehemiah 5:12–13 as a text describing the shaking of clothing. Yet the context of the Nehemiah passage makes clear the purpose that his particular performance is not the same as that of Jacob's or Paul's shaking. Nehemiah's performance is similar to treaty oaths found elsewhere: “Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied.” As this text demonstrates, Nehemiah is not symbolically making himself clean of their sins but is establishing divine retribution if they do not live up to their oath. The distinction between function and form is an important one for those who study ritual because many rites may appear similar to one another and yet have completely different meanings, like shaking and dusting. For more on treaty curses, see Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).
42. There are two other references that suggest Jacob performed this rite, though neither one actually describes a specific event. See Jacob 1:19; 2:2.
43. There is no official record that indicates that the rite of shaking one's garments has been practiced in this dispensation. There is mention of its performance by Parley P. Pratt as a missionary according to the journal of Ashbel Kitchell, a Shaker elder (the following keeps the original spelling and grammar):

We continued on friendly terms in the way of trade and other acts of good neighborhood until the spring of 1831 when we were visited on Saturday evening by Sidney Rigdon and Leman Copley, the latter of whom had been among us; but not liking the cross any too well, had taken up with Mormonism as the easier plan and had been appointed by them as one of the missionaries to convert us.

They tarried all night, and in the course of the evening, the doctrines of the cross and the Mormon faith were both investigated; and we found that the life of Christ self-denial corresponded better with the life of Christ, than Mormonism. . . .

Sabbath morning matters moved on pleasantly in sociable chat with the Brethren, until I felt to give them all some council, which was for neither to force their doctrine on the other at this time; but let the time be spent in feeling of the Spirit, as it was Rigdon's first visit. . . .

A little before meeting, another one came from the Mormon camp as an assistant, by the name of Parley Pratt. He called them

out, and enquired how they had got along? and was informed by Rigdon and Leman, that I had bound them to silence, and nothing could be done. Parley told them to pay no attention to me, for they had come with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the people must hear it, &c.

They came into meeting and sat quietly untill the meeting was through, and the people dismissed; when Sidney Ridgon arose and stated that he had a message from the Lord Jesus Christ to this people; could he have the privilege of delivering it? He was told he might. He then read the following Message [the text of D&C, section 49].

At the close of the reading, he asked if they could be permitted to go forth in the exercise of their gift and office.—I told him that the piece he had read, bore on its face, the image of its author; that the Christ that dictated that, I was well acquainted with, and had been, from a boy; that I had been much troubled to get rid of his influence, and I wished to have nothing more to do with him; and as for any gift he had authorized them to exercise among us, I would release them & their Christ from any further burden about us, and take all the responsibility on myself.

Sidney made answer—This you cannot do; I wish to hear the people speak. I told him if he desired it, they could speak for themselves, and stepped back and told them to let the man know how they felt; which they did in something like these words; that they were fully satisfied with what they had, and wished to have nothing to do with either them or their Christ. On hearing this Rigdon professed to be satisfied, and put his paper by; but Parley Pratt arose and commenced shaking his coattail; he said he shook the dust from his garments as a testimony against us, that we had rejected the word of the Lord Jesus.

Before the words were out of his mouth, I was to him, and said; —You filthy Beast. . . . I then turned to the Believers and said, now we will go home and started. . . . They all followed us to the house. . . . Sidney stayed for supper. . . .

He was treated kindly and let go after supper. But Leman tarried all night and started for home in the morning.” (For the full account, see Lawrence R. Flake, “A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission,” in *Brigham Young University Studies* 20, no. 1 [1979], 94–98.)

44. Most of the accounts that follow can be found in the Mormon Missionary Diaries Collection found in the Digital Collection of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections of Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library. The collection holds the diaries of 220 missionaries, most from the nineteenth to

- early twentieth centuries. Of these, only twenty mention the performance of wiping dust off the feet.
45. John Murdock journal and autobiography, June 14, 1831, L. Tom Perry Special Collections. As for the performance of the rite, it appears that Murdock is using the New Testament text to describe his own practice, since wiping does not appear in any of the Doctrine and Covenants texts but is the New Testament verb.
  46. In fact, the text above suggests that Murdock may have been an ungracious guest by his condemning his host in the host’s own home, which would have justified, at least following the norms of hospitality, turning him out of the house.
  47. November 18, 1831, entry in *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–36*, ed. Jan Shipp and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 61. The other performances also demonstrate that nonreception of the message, not inhospitality, was the cause for performance. In one case, the rite was performed because the elders found a schoolhouse they were scheduled to speak in still locked up. In another case, the rite was performed following a confrontation with a preacher who charged them fifty cents for breakfast, and in yet another case the rite was performed when a tavern keeper “abused” the two elders after they had asked for bread and milk without paying for it. Finally, in the last one, the elders were invited in to speak before a gathering, and after having done so for two hours, the elders asked for monetary donations. Having received none, the two felt that they had done their duty and “wiped the dust of [their] feet and [they] also cleansed [their] feet in pure water” (182–83).
  48. *The Journals of Jesse Bennett, 1869–1949*, vol. 1, 1889–90, see entry for September 14–15, 1889 (pp. 53–55).
  49. *Journal of Ellis Seymour Heninger*, vol. 1, 1899–1900, see entry for September 11–12, 1900 (pp. 116–17).
  50. Nephi Pratt, in Conference Report, April 1906.
  51. *Journal of Oz Flake*, vol. 1, 1897–1998, Southern States Mission: “April 14, 1898—some of the people are very careless about our work some are interested while others are opposed. But it seems to me signs enough are given the people a preacher last year made a big fight against two of our Elders (Jones & Com) in this state they washed feet against him and in 4 days he died another Minister recently made a big fight against two of our boys, in Webster County (Porter & Com.) kept them out of an appointed and waged war on them and in two weeks dropped dead in his pulpit. There is often just such signs and others. Such as healing the sick and yet the people say all these signs are done away with but they have no proof of it. While we have plenty of evidence that it is they are not ‘there are none so blind as they who will not see’” (p. 179). The second account is found in Lucy Mack Smith’s

- commentary concerning a performance of the rite by her son Samuel and discussed later in this paper (see note 70).
52. "An Epistle of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in Nauvoo, to the Saints Scattered Abroad," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 15 (June 1, 1842): 809–10. The names of the signed are William Marks, Austin Cowles, and Charles C. Rich (presidents); James Allred, Elias Higbee, George W. Harris, Aaron Johnson, William Huntington Sr., Henry G. Sherwood, Samuel E. Bent, Lewis D. Wilson, David Fulmer, Thomas Grover, Newell Knight, Leonard Soby (attestators); and Hosea Stout (clerk).
  53. The one account that is known of the performance of the rite of wiping dust off the feet for general persecution of nonmissionary Saints is described by Brigham Young in the *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 7, 557: "The labors of the day having been brought to a close at so early an hour, viz., eight-thirty, it was thought proper to have a little season of recreation. Accordingly, Brother Hanson was invited to produce his violin, which he did, and played several lively airs accompanied by Elisha Averett on his flute, among others some very good lively dancing tunes. This was too much for the gravity of Brother Joseph Young who indulged in dancing a hornpipe, and was soon joined by several others, and before the dance was over several French fours were indulged in. The first was opened by myself with Sister Whitney and Elder Heber C. Kimball and partner. The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers, and while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from our feet as a testimony against the nation."
  54. The exchange between President Rich and the First Presidency is in the Latter-day Saint Church History Library and is not available to the public. While the author has not seen these letters himself, he has confirmed their existence and content.
  55. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission According to Holy Scriptures Both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915). The work's status with regard to the canon is admittedly a little confusing. Though the book is not one of the standard works, we are told in the introduction that "the completed work has been read to and is approved by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve." Today it is part of the Missionary Reference Library, a set of noncanonical texts that provide the basic elements of Latter-day Saint theology.
  56. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 345–46.
  57. Not all ordinances, as understood this way, are necessarily salvific. The general Church priesthood manual, *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B*, describes two types of ordinances: "Ordinances that are necessary for us to return to Heavenly Father include baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, conferral of the Melchizedek

Priesthood (for brethren), the temple endowment, and temple marriage. . . . The Lord has given many priesthood ordinances that we may receive or perform for guidance and comfort. These include the naming and blessing of children, administering to the sick, patriarchal blessings, father’s blessings, blessings of guidance and comfort, and dedication of graves.”

58. John Taylor, in Conference Report, April 1899: “I say this is the way Christ is going to Judge the world, for He gave a special commandment that when you should go into a house or a city you should enquire who is worthy to receive you, and if they do so, let your peace rest upon that household and say unto them, ‘the kingdom of God is nigh unto you; but if they reject you shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them, for it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the city of Sodom or Gomorrhah than for that city or household that rejecteth you.’” Interestingly, President Taylor is not directly quoting a specific New Testament passage since the term *reject* does not appear in any of the KJV New Testament texts.
59. Elder S. Dilworth Young, in Conference Report, April 1968: “There have been times when we thought that if we approached a man, and he, hostile because of stories he had heard about us, or suspicious because we were strangers, rebuffed us, then we had done our duty by shaking off the dust of our feet against him. We have not done that duty until we have given him a fair chance to learn that his prejudices are unfounded. To find families and show them by our love that we are truly followers of Jesus Christ is our manifest duty.”
60. J. Reuben Clark Jr., *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life: A Series of Radio Talks* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970). The book is a compilation of a radio series by President Clark beginning in 1949.
61. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 1:206: “When our Lord sent forth his disciples to proclaim the gospel message he instructed them to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against those who opposed them. . . . The elders were to seek out from among the people the honest in heart and leaven their warning testimony with all others, thus they would become clean from their blood.”
62. John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939).
63. *The General Handbook of Instructions* emerged in 1960; there are earlier publications such as the *Handbook of Instructions for Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks* (published from 1928 to 1950), and even earlier texts such as the *Annual Instructions* and *Circular of Instructions* (interchangeable titles from 1890 to 1923). In none of these are there instructions concerning the performance of this rite. Nor are there any in any *Mission President’s Handbook of Instructions* (the earliest of which seems to be 1959).

64. Hyrum Smith and Janne E. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, Jr., the Prophet/with an Introduction and Historical and Exegetical Notes by Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), provide commentary to the rite for sections 24, 60, and 103. For section 24, they provide Jewish tradition like Talmage, though they do not provide sourcing for either. For section 60, they state that the rite is in response to rejection of the message, but then also add “scoffers and persecutors” to the list of those who are to receive the rite. Finally, in section 103 they give no background but simply state that God will deliver the judgment.
65. See Hoyt W. Brewster, *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), who quotes both Smith and Sjodahl as well as Joseph Fielding Smith’s *Church History and Modern Revelation* (hereafter referred to as *CHMR*). Similarly, Daniel H. Ludlow, *Companion to the Study of the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), quotes these two sources. Leann G. Otten and C. Max Caldwell, in their study *Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 1 (Springville, UT: LEMB, ca. 1982–83), use Smith and Sjodahl as their sole source, though in their second volume they quote Smith’s *CHMR* directly. Richard O. Cowan, in his study *Answers to Your Questions Concerning the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), utilizes *CHMR*. Two more recent commentaries both use Talmage’s commentary for their description of the rite. Also H. Dean Garrett and Stephen E. Robinson, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000–2004); and Craig Ostler and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration: A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants and Other Modern Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), quote Talmage directly.
66. Ostler and McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration*: “After the call of the Twelve in our day, we would understand this authority to rest with them, as it did anciently, or to those to whom they directly give it. The authority to perform the same has not been given to missionaries generally. Those performing this ordinance are further directed that it not be done in the presence of those they are testifying against “lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment” (D&C 60:15). See commentary on D&C 75:20–21.” See also H. Dean Garrett, Stephen E. Robinson, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000–2004), 16: “Cleanse your feet even with water. This is an apostolic responsibility not extended to other missionaries. The action described here is a variation on shaking the dust off the feet.”
67. This paper used two folklore collections. The first collection (Curtis Webb, “Dusting off of the Feet” [Logan: Utah State University, Fife Folklore Archives, 1980]) includes fourteen anecdotes; the second (Carolyn S.

- Hudson, "Dusting of the Feet" [Provo, UT: L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University, 1983]), includes fifteen.
68. These texts would fit within the third category of ritual texts described earlier in the paper: unreal ritual texts. This type of text can be characterized as fiction, but fiction that describes an actual ritual activity; thus its value is in determining the role of the ritual within a given culture's imagination. Whether practiced or not, the presence of unreal ritual texts demonstrates that the rite, even if simply imagined, defines certain cultural practices. The nonhistoricity of the anecdotal accounts concerning wiping dust off feet places them within the domain of fiction, yet they clearly have a function similar to actual practice in defining the missionary and missionary work and have a clear place within the mission's imagination.
  69. A few at least appear to be later explanations for phenomena that happened while missionaries were present. For instance, one account related in 1983 told of a performance in "1970 or 1974" in which two missionaries dusted their feet against the city of Huaraz, Peru. A week later an earthquake struck, killing the inhabitants. Indeed there was an earthquake that struck Huaraz in May of 1970, which killed approximately 20,000 inhabitants, yet this figure is unsurprising, because this earthquake killed between 75,000 and 80,000 Peruvians total. Thus it appears that a significant, random, and traumatic event was given meaning by suggesting that at least a localized aspect of it was the consequence of the performance of this rite.
  70. The only nineteenth-century account that suggests immediate consequences is that of Samuel Smith, the brother of Joseph, who is recorded as washing his feet against an individual who promptly died of smallpox within two weeks. Unfortunately, this event is described only in Lucy Mack Smith's history and not in Samuel's own words. According to Lucy, Samuel had been thrown out of an inn when he offered to sell a Book of Mormon to the proprietor. Two weeks later, Samuel and his parents passed the same inn and saw a smallpox warning on it. Upon meeting a local inhabitant they asked what happened and were told that the innkeeper and two of his family had contracted smallpox, supposedly from a traveler, and died. The individual also said that he knew of no one else contracting the disease. This is followed in the account by Lucy's interpretation of the event: "This is a specimen of the peculiar dispositions of some individuals, who would purchase their death for a few shillings, but sacrifice their soul's salvation rather than give a Saint of God a meal of victuals. According to the Word of God, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for such persons." This quote is from *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir*, ed. Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 480. While Lucy's explanation, particularly in paraphrasing the New Testament texts, suggests that she believed the deaths were the result of

Samuel's act, this is not stated clearly. Moreover, one needs to take into account that these memoirs were written in 1844–45, fifteen years after the event itself. Lucy also tells that Samuel washed his feet in June 1830, at least two weeks before the first Doctrine and Covenants set of instructions was made available. Thus, either Samuel had received earlier instruction on the rite, or he had performed it without any instruction, or Lucy's recollection of the event has been affected by the later Doctrine and Covenants instructions. In any case, since this influential account is not Samuel's, but Lucy's, who was not an actual eyewitness of the event, and because it was written fifteen years later, the account appears to be the first of the anecdotal texts for this rite. Intriguingly, the account emphasizes not the rejection of the message *per se*, but the lack of hospitality provided.