Fire on Ice
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The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints
at Home and Abroad

Fred E. Woods
Dedicated to my Icelandic friends at home and abroad
and to the memory of those who have crossed the ocean
to carry the message of the restored gospel to the land of fire
and ice as an everlasting testimony that the Great Husbandman
surely remembers those who are upon the isles of the sea.
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How did the message of Mormonism come to Iceland? Who were the earliest Latter-day Saint missionaries that brought the news of a restored gospel, and what obstacles did they encounter in the land of fire and ice? Who were the first Icelanders willing to leave their beloved homeland and immigrate to the United States of America? Many people are surprised to learn these adventurers, eager to gather to Utah, were converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; commonly known as Latter-day Saints or Mormons.

It was no small feat that these brave Icelandic immigrants made the arduous journey to Utah by sail, rail, and trail and assimilated into the western American Mormon culture during the nineteenth century. These transplanted Icelanders have and continue to stamp a significant cultural imprint upon Utahns.

This book chronicles the Latter-day Saint history in Iceland and Utah and specifically examines the interrelationships between Icelandic converts and connections in their native homeland with those who immigrated to Spanish Fork, Utah.
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This singular history, largely neglected until now,¹ is unveiled in this landmark study during this 2005 dual sesquicentennial commemoration of both the arrival of the first Icelandic Latter-day Saints in Utah as well as the earliest settlement of Icelanders in the United States.

Note

1. Several articles have been written in Icelandic addressing the Mormon Icelanders, but most are based on secondary literature and are quite often redundant. La Nora Allred’s *The Icelanders of Utah* is the only book published in English on this topic. In 1998 she graciously relinquished her publication rights of this book to the Icelandic Association of Utah. Although the historical component of her compilation often lacks documentation, Allred gathered useful and important genealogical data.
Due to its stark geological contrasts of active volcanoes, vast ice fields, and glaciers, Iceland has become known as “the land of fire and ice.”¹ Located on a North Atlantic island not far from Greenland’s western coast, Iceland consists of nearly forty thousand square miles. About 25 percent larger than Scotland and almost the size of Cuba, it was left uninhabited for several centuries while people settled in lands they deemed more favorable.²

Concealed by glacial Greenland and the vast Atlantic, it was not until the eighth century AD that Irish monks began to establish themselves in Iceland in order to avoid dwelling with pagans.³ However, during the century that followed, aggressive Norsemen penetrated the Icelandic realm, carrying with them their Viking sagas filled with pagan poetry as well as their heathen mythology. But in spite of their formidable influence, Christianity soon gained the upper hand in the land of fire and ice.
The Adoption of Christianity

In AD 1000 the Icelandic National Parliament (the Althing) held its annual two-week summer session in Þingvellir (Parliament’s Field), a remote area of southwest Iceland where it had convened every year since AD 930. Here, amidst lush plains, lava cliffs dramatically evidence an earlier time when fire and molten rock encountered ice, an encounter symbolic of the spiritual confrontation that occurred when the fire of Christianity collided head-on with the frigid forces of paganism. It was here that the parliament officially adopted Christianity as Iceland’s national religion.⁴ This development proved to be the most consequential religious event in the history of Iceland.

The official adoption of Christianity was, in large measure, politically influenced. One contributing factor was sitting on the throne in Norway. Ólafr Tryggvason, a Christian convert
and then king of Norway, was serious about bringing the country of Iceland into Christian subjection. Another determining influence was the reasoning of parliamentary speaker Þorgeirr, who persuaded his colleagues of the Althing that it was better to have Icelanders embrace one religion than to have the country divided over this primary theological matter. As a result, all pagans were to be baptized as Christians, although the denominational division between the Catholics and the Lutherans would later become a contentious issue which this Scandinavian country would have to deal with.⁵

Catholicism Loses Its Grip

During the five centuries that followed, Catholic ecclesiastical institutions were erected throughout Iceland. Michael Fell writes: “By the early sixteenth century the Icelandic Church had been under the jurisdiction of Rome for five hundred years. Politically, Iceland had been under the control of the combined kingdom of Denmark-Norway for over a century.” Further, “bishops-elect for the two Icelandic dioceses [in Skálholt and Hólar] had to be approved by the Danish king and consecrated by the archbishop of Niðarós in Norway.”⁶ However, by the mid-sixteenth century, the hand of Rome and the fingers of Catholicism were losing their ecclesiastical grip as the Reformation reached the land of fire and ice. But the loosening did not occur without a struggle. Bishop Jón Arason (1484–1550) fought doggedly to preserve Catholicism from his position as the ecclesiastical head of the Hólar diocese.

With the death of Frederick I, king of Denmark-Norway in 1533, Catholicism began to take her last breaths. King Christian III, who succeeded Frederick, was a devoted Lutheran. Christian issued an ordinance that restructured the Catholic Church to align with Luther’s teachings. Five years
later, his decree reached the banks of Iceland, but Lutheranism did not fully take root until Bishop Arason and two of his sons were beheaded in the fall of 1550. This act severed the last remaining advocates of Catholicism.⁷

During this transitional period (1538–50), the country was divided: Bishop Gissur Einarsson served as the first Lutheran bishop of the Skálholt diocese, while Bishop Arason strongly advocated Catholicism from his Hólar diocese until he drew his last breath. Ironically, it was Arason who brought the first printing press to Iceland (about 1530), which provided the reformers with a translation of the Bible into Icelandic as well as an Icelandic translation of Luther’s *Lesser Catechism*.⁸

**The Age of Learning**

During the next two centuries (1550–1750), known as the “Age of Learning,” a deepened desire to learn the word of God brought an increased longing for literacy among the peasants and other common folk. Fell argues that “since the country’s only printing press was under the control of the [Lutheran] Church, almost the only books printed in that period were of religious and devotional character.”⁹ Further, he states that it was certainly not coincidental that the invention of the printing press and paper was immediately followed by the Reformation: “Its success depended on the ability of the Reformers to broadcast their views through multitudes of books and pamphlets. It is not surprising that the Lutheran Reformation led ultimately to an almost universal literacy among Icelanders.”¹⁰

A century later, a catalytic event further strengthened the position of the Lutheran Church. In 1847 the Theological Seminary was established in Reykjavík, which then made it possible for applicants for priesthood leadership to obtain a local theological indoctrination without leaving their homeland. Furthermore, the following year absolutism was finally re-
voked by the Danish king Frederick VII,¹¹ opening the door to secularization and religious pluralism. Into this door stepped Jón Sigurðsson (1811–79), who commenced his lengthy and passionate political crusade for home rule. In the early years, his campaign included a convening of the National Assembly in Reykjavík in the year 1851 for the purpose of determining what kind of relationship Iceland’s sixty thousand inhabitants should have with Denmark.¹²

With all of these important developments shaping Iceland’s fabric and design, the introduction of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as LDS) in 1851 was yet another thread woven into her unique tapestry. Perhaps the same spirit which lit a fire in Sigurðsson to advocate home rule at this National Assembly ignited a similar flame in the hearts and minds of a few Icelanders who became the first in their country to embrace the LDS Church in the mid-nineteenth century.
Notes

1. La Nora Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah* (reprint, Spanish Fork, UT: Icelandic Association of Utah, 1998), 2, notes that Iceland is 194 miles wide and 298 miles long and that it contains 107 volcanoes and about five thousand miles of glaciers and snowfields.


6. Fell, *And Some Fell into Good Soil*, 89


10. Fell, *And Some Fell into Good Soil*, 105; emphasis added.

11. The term absolutism refers to absolute control of the monarchy, which was imposed on Iceland by the Danish king Frederik III in 1662. Karlsson, *The History of Iceland*, 149, notes that by 1665 “the absolute monarchy acquired its formal constitution in the Royal
CHAPTER 1: THE SETTING

Law, which granted the King of Denmark the most absolute power that any sovereign in Europe was ever to attain.” Thus the door of opportunity for religious pluralism was completely shut for nearly two centuries.

How did the restored gospel come to Iceland? This query cannot be appropriately answered without examining the inspiring story of Guðmundur Guðmundsson, one of Iceland’s first converts and Latter-day Saint missionaries.¹ Guðmundur Guðmundsson was born on March 10, 1825, to Guðmundur Benediktsson and Guðrún Vigfúsdóttir on a farm at Ártun, in the Rangárvellir district of the Oddi Parish in Iceland. He was baptized into the Lutheran Church on March 23, 1825, at his home.² Guðmundur’s parents were faithful, God-fearing people who lived in poverty, which was intensified by having a large family. Guðmundur remembered his parents as “poor but devout and pious; my father especially was very pious and often reminded his children . . . to honor God. . . . We were ten sisters and brothers, and I was the youngest son.”³

When Guðmundur was ten years old, his parents moved to eastern Landeyjar, an area called Voðmúlastaður in the Rangárvellir district. He was left in the care of his father’s dear friend, Magnús Árnasson, a smith at Ártun. There he
Guðmundur Guðmundsson pictured with his goldsmith tools. He was trained as a goldsmith in Denmark, where he joined the Latter-day Saint Church. *Courtesy of Ralph Abraham Trane, great-grandson of Guðmundur Guðmundsson*
found companionship with Þórarinn Hafliðason, who became his childhood friend and whom he would later introduce to the restored Church. Together they labored in a companionship as Iceland’s first missionaries.⁴

Records indicate that in 1841 Guðmundur received his confirmation during the Trinity Celebration of the Reverend Helgi Þórðarson.⁵ At the time of Guðmundur’s confirmation, the parish priest recorded that he was “very capable, well-behaved, and very gifted.”⁶ On May 17, 1842, he moved in with Halldór Þórarson, a relative of Magnús Árnasson who had just died. Guðmundur spent the next few years learning all he could from his trade master, Halldór Þórarson, after which he went to Copenhagen to study goldsmithing, in approximately 1845. After four years in Copenhagen, he passed the journeyman’s exam and then worked for a time in Denmark, at Slagelse in Sjaeland, and for a year in Copenhagen.⁷ Concerning his training as a goldsmith, Guðmundur wrote,

When I was 8 years old, I was a brass worker apprentice, and when I had learned this profession, along with becoming a Lutheran through Confirmation, I was encouraged in a curi-
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ous manner to travel to Copenhagen to learn the goldsmith profession. . . . My parents were both dead and I felt alone and forsaken in the world. I had only a few acquaintances and hardly any friends, neither had I many possessions. I was finally able to become a goldsmith apprentice for five years with the promise that if I satisfied my master I would get a half year’s reduction, which I honestly received and was discharged with a good recommendation.⁸

Introduction and Conversion to Mormonism

Guðmundur relates that the following year he worked as journeyman goldsmith, recounting the following:

In the meantime I lodged with a good friend Thorarin Haflidason, who had recently become a journeyman cabinet maker. His father’s brother was my oldest sister’s husband. He was the first who talked to me about the wonderful sect called the “Mormons,” as he told me that he had been to their meetings and heard them preach and he now wished that I would go and hear them. But I cursed and swore since I knew that it was just nonsense and imagination, and all these disturbing Anabaptists only were religious fanatics. At last, I let myself be convinced to listen to my friend’s meek remarks since I knew that what I had said about these people was unfounded because I had not seen a single soul of them or heard their doctrine. Therefore, I promised I would come and hear them, which I did that following Sabbath. . . . Brother Erastus Snow⁹ spoke. Even though his preaching was very hard to understand because he still wasn’t perfect in the Danish language, his honest face radiated a fatherly love which made a deep impression on me. . . . When I saw these people greet one another with a warmth and affection,
. . . I was greatly amazed since I had never witnessed [this
with] other sects as I had known them. They were also so
friendly towards the strangers which came to hear them. I
decided right then that I would search their teachings. After
their counsel and teaching, I prayed with a sincere heart. . . . I
quickly became convinced of the truth and desired baptism.
This was during the winter and there was a thick ice on the
water. Brother C. Christiansen performed the ordinance of
baptism . . . an indescribable bliss went through my entire
soul. I was confirmed by the laying on of hands by Erastus
Snow, P. [Peter] O. Hansen and others.¹⁰

About this same time, Guðmundur’s childhood friend
Þórarinn Hafliðason likewise joined the Church.¹¹ In the
spring of 1851, Erastus Snow ordained Þórarinn a priest and
Guðmundur a teacher.¹² According to Elder Snow, Latter-day
Saint Apostle and the Scandinavian Mission president, a third
Icelander had joined the Church in Copenhagen about this
time. In a letter to Elder Franklin D. Richards dated July 10,
1851, Snow noted, “In the spring three Icelanders who had
embraced the faith in Copenhagen returned to their native
land, with the Book of Mormon and pamphlets, two of whom
I ordained and commanded them to labor among their people,
as the Lord opened their way.”¹³

Missionary Labors

Þórarinn arranged for Guðmundur and himself to go on
separate voyages to the Westmann Islands. Þórarinn arrived
first, and Guðmundur followed shortly thereafter, arriving on
May 12.¹⁴ Guðmundur’s reception was quite different from
what he had expected; he had anticipated that all Icelanders
would joyfully receive the glad tidings of the gospel as he had. He reported:

Having found the fruits of the gospel more sweet and desirable than any other fruit, I expected that every person would believe my testimony, especially my own relatives, but alas, when I arrived in Iceland I preached to my brothers and sisters in vain; they would not receive me, and as my pious parents had died, I felt myself left alone, like “Elijah of old in the cave.” However, I soon found a few believing friends, who, notwithstanding strong opposition on the part of the priests, were ready to embrace the truth. I was often rebuked, spit upon and mocked by enemies, but being full of the love of God, I felt no anger or indignation against those who persecuted me.¹⁵
The young men began to preach the gospel on the island, but almost immediately the local papers published false reports about “Mormons,” and the religious leaders warned the people not to listen to these missionaries whom they called “false prophets, who had come to deceive their countrymen.”¹⁶ Guðmundsson remembered the following:

Immediately after we set our feet on the land, we noticed that we were not as welcome as we normally would have been if we hadn’t been “Mormons.” Our arrival was already announced over the whole land and . . . lies were made public in the country’s newspapers with warnings and proclamations from the country’s bishops and highest officials. . . . The people were strongly commanded not to receive us or listen to us speak. One of these proclamations was sent especially to the priests and the authorities on Vestman Island. We were then immediately summoned (to court) and were strongly forbidden to spread our teachings.¹⁷

That Guðmundur had encountered serious difficulties is implied by this letter dated May 31, 1851, in which he appealed to the civil governor of Iceland, Jorgen S. Trampe:

I want, of simpleness of heart to explain for your honor, as the highest authority over the people, my spiritual feelings, by making you aware of the effort now which is taken against my religious teaching, against not only me but also Almighty God and his Son’s Law, and those Lutheran religious teachings which are built upon the Bible and not upon the teachings of man.

I know that I am detestable in the eyes of the world so I now offer only my testimony, believing rather that each and every one of the true believers would find the power to ask God, with a humble heart, to teach them of the truth,
such spiritual seriousness being necessary, and would soften all, though they literally observe those holy writings which give salvation to each human who seeks God with a humble heart and is the way intended for both small and great.

And you would do well, O Great Leader, to consider that this is not from me only, but of thy God and because of the truth.

I trust in thy high calling to adopt not a course of evil, as I point out, O learned ones, and presume to allow my feelings to come to light, which are without objection according to the will of God. May God work a holy work through you.¹⁸

However, a few days later the Westmann Islands district sheriff, J. N. Abel, apparently created greater problems for Guðmundsson. On June 3, 1851, Abel also wrote a letter to the governor. Abel discussed the inherent dangers posed by the arrival of the Church to the islands and mentioned Guðmundsson, about whom the sheriff seemed to be uneasy because of Guðmundur’s intelligence, eloquence, and character. The sheriff’s letter breathes a spirit of concern over the Latter-day Saints’ presence:

It is disturbing to know that this unholy teaching, in their book of epistles has gained a solid hold much more quickly than was expected. . . . A goldsmith journeyman, Guðmundur Guðmundsson, came here 12 May and not in poverty, and had with him his faith’s dogma translated into Icelandic, so I took measures to lay hold upon the information—in case he worked zealously and received a good following. The result is such that a certain poor man and his wife were re-baptized [from their church to the LDS Church] in the night between 26th and 27th of May. Others who were preparing
to be baptized were present at the ceremony and among them Loftur Jónsson, the parish clerk, mediator and member of parliament. . . . I want to now ask you, in your high office—your honor—whether I ought to release him from the board of conciliation and replace him.¹⁹

The boldness of these first missionaries to Iceland can be ascertained by reading an account written by Þórdur Diðriksson, who was then serving with a Lutheran priest on the Westmann Islands:

When I first heard these two Latter Day Saints preach the eternal gospel, I thought they were unnaturally bold, and they set forth so many proofs to establish their faith and principles that no one could withstand them in the Bible. . . . I went three times to their meetings where a foundation of faith was laid in me for my faith. But at the same time I was confused and also frightened that if I accepted this new doctrine I wouldn’t be able to stand against all the hate and lies which it met everywhere.²⁰

Þórdur Diðriksson, pictured above, wrote the first LDS Icelandic missionary tract and helped many fellow Icelanders assimilate into the valley. Courtesy of Fred L. Dedrickson
Such boldness created excitement and led to the conversion of several. The missionaries’ first converts were Benedikt Hansson and his wife, Ragnhildur Stefánsdóttir, apparently the poor man and his wife noted in Abel’s letter. As a result of their preaching and these conversions, the missionaries were summoned to appear before the Westmann Islands local court and were forbidden to preach or to try to obtain any more converts. The sheriff’s letter was effective. Now the missionaries had to act with greater caution and instruct interested parties in private. Another blow to the work came when Þórarinn’s wife, strongly opposed to her husband’s conversion, burned his Mormon literature and, according to Magnús Bjarnasson (whom Þórarinn had introduced to the gospel), she “became desperate and threatened to drown herself.” Therefore, Þórarinn ceased to do missionary work.

Ironically, in December of the same year it was not his distraught wife who drowned, but rather Þórarinn himself, in a fishing accident. Guðmundur informed Copenhagen of this tragic event, noting that twenty-four people on the island desired baptism but that no one was authorized to perform the ordinance. When Elder Erastus Snow heard the sad news, he recalled a prompting he had received while ordaining Guðmundur to the office of teacher—that he should also ordain Guðmundur to the office of elder, but “he gave the inspiration no heed, as the young man seemed so enthusiastic, while his companion (Brother Hafliðason) seemed more sedate and thoughtful.” Elder Snow now needed to find the right elder to send to Iceland. Peter O. Hansen, who had baptized Guðmundur less than a year earlier, desired to serve as Guðmundur’s companion, but he was held back when passport
Chapter 2: The Restored Gospel Comes to Iceland

officials learned of Hansen’s designs. Nearly two years elapsed before an elder was sent.²⁵

In the LDS Copenhagen Conference of April 1853, Elder John Lorentzen spoke of the blessings of God upon the Scandinavian people and mentioned Guðmundur Guðmundsson, who had remained faithful in spite of the severe persecutions he had faced alone on a far island. Lorentzen felt that “if it was the will of God the speaker desired to go there (Iceland) to preach the gospel and circulate tracts, . . . he hoped that God would make Iceland a fruitful field for the promulgation of the true work of Christ.” Before the meeting came to a close, he was sustained as president of the Icelandic Mission.²⁶

Guðmundur wrote the following report of Elder Lorentzen’s arrival in Iceland:

When John P. Lorenzen came to our island in 1853 I received him with an open heart and did all in my power to make his visit among us as pleasant as possible, but he could not do much by way of teaching the natives the principles of the gospel, for the inhabitants of the Westman Islands could not understand Danish. Soon after his arrival we gathered our friends quietly together and we decided that we would proceed in single file by different roads to a certain private place which we had selected in a beautiful little round valley surrounded by nature’s own mountain walls. In the midst of this most picturesque valley was found a small grassy plain, as level as a floor and containing something like 20 acres of land. We approached this place one at a time, in order to avoid being noticed by our opponents and persecutors. Here in nature’s pure embrace with nothing but the blue canopy of heaven for our covering we raised our hands and our voices ‘on high’ and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus to bless and sanctify this lovely spot, surrounded
by these romantic mountain walls. Then I was ordained an elder under the hands of Johan P. Lorensen according to the instructions which he had received from the president of the Scandinavian mission. We sang hymns, prayed and preached, and I translated Elder Lorensen’s words into Icelandic. . . . All those who were present were subsequently baptized.²⁷

Branch of LDS Church Established

On June 19, 1853, Elder Lorentzen organized the first branch of the Church on the Westmann Islands, which contained six members and Elder Guðmundsson, who was called as branch president.²⁸ Lorentzen and Guðmundur labored together another year until Guðmundur returned to Denmark in 1854, after having baptized nine people since the latter’s conversion in 1851.²⁹ Guðmundur wrote of the difficulties he experienced during his mission to his homeland:

After having preached in Iceland from April 1851 until July 1854 for about 3 years and 6 months, and done the best I could, yet there wee but few that received the Gospel; still I believe, there are many that will receive it in [the] future. . . . I have prayed for them in the caves of the mountains, and in private rooms, I have shed tears. . . . The Lord has softened my heart. . . . I remember having praised him when I had to eat the heads of dried fish. . . . I enjoyed that meal, I thanked the Lord, because he provided for me.³⁰

Though he planned to immigrate to Zion, Guðmundur decided to first serve a mission in Denmark, spending about eighteen months there as a missionary. While assigned to the city of Kalundborg, he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel and then conscripted into the Danish military. He wrote: “I . . .
was put in prison, for about 7 weeks, and when they could find no fault with me, except that I had baptized, and had preached the Gospel, I was justified in that respect, but I was charged to serve as a soldier for 4 years in the Danish armee [sic]; I was conducted by the police to Copenhagen. . . . I had to put on the military attire, they gave me a big gun, a sabre. . . . I felt dreadful bad, in this position.”

Because his health had suffered due to poor prison conditions, he found the military training extremely difficult. Guðmundur was also a victim of ridicule and scorn for his religious beliefs. His health worsened, and he was placed in a hospital. After a rigorous period of over thirteen months in the military, he was finally discharged for poor health but not before he had preached the gospel to hospital roommates and had converted a corporal.

Concerning his release, Guðmundur wrote:

When I had been there [the hospital] for a long time, it was determined that I should be presented for the physicians and the General of the Battalion, that they might judge whether I was fit for the service or not; this happened the very day, when the Emigration was going to have a Conference before their journey to Zion. . . . They examined my breast with their instruments, and declared, that I, on account of weakness in the lungs was unfit for military service. They then gave me a passport and my own clothes, and I came to the Conference, to the astonishment of Every one, and I myself was astonished, because I knew that my lungs were as healthful as they could be. I knew it was the work of the Lord. . . . It was proposed, that I should go to Zion, . . . and I am now here, and it is just here as I want to be.
Guðmundur Guðmundsson goldsmithing while living in Utah.

*Courtesy of the Geslison family*
Journey to America

Guðmundur joined an LDS company of 522 souls who gathered in Liverpool to cross the Atlantic on a sailing vessel called the Westmoreland. Also aboard was the Niels Garff family from Sjaelland, whom Guðmundur had taught the gospel. Niels and his wife Marie,³⁴ who had been baptized March 31, 1855, had embarked from Copenhagen with their three sons and one daughter.³⁵

Concerning the journey to Zion, Guðmundur supplies few details. He noted simply, “Emigrated for America April 18, & arrived in the [Salt Lake] Valley Sep. 13, 1857.”³⁶ In order to pay for his passage, Guðmundur evidently worked as a cook on the ship,³⁷ but little else is known about his maritime immigration experience. After disembarking at Philadelphia, Guðmundur and the Garff family traveled to Iowa City, Iowa, which was the designated migration route during 1857. They then traveled on to Florence, Nebraska, where they joined the handcart company of Christian Christensen. While crossing the plains, sickness devastated the Garff family when Niels Garff and his daughter died. However, just before his death, Niels made Guðmundur promise to take care of his family. Guðmundur promised, and
true to his word, shortly after their arrival in Salt Lake City, he
married Marie Garff on October 4, 1857.³⁸

Notes

1. The front page of the book The Life History of Gudmundur
Gudmundsson, compiled by Lavon Brunt Eyring (n.p., 1984),
L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham
Young University, Provo, UT, hereafter cited as Life History, notes
that “Gudmundur Gudmundsson changed his name to Gudmund
Gudmundsen after arriving in Utah.” He is also referred to in other
accounts by the first name Gudmund; others use the surname
Gudmundson. The writer, recognizing these variables, has chosen to
use his proper Icelandic name of Guðmundur Guðmundsson.

2. This information, derived from the Oddi Parrish records, was
provided by Sigríður Sigurðardóttir and Valgeir Sigurðsson, who are
native Icelanders.

Gudmundsson,” holograph, microfilm, [1], Church Archives, The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; hereafter
cited as Church Archives. See also Andrew Jenson, “Gudmund Gud-
mundson,” Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia: A Compila-
tion of Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Women in the
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City:
Andrew Jenson History, 1901–36), 3:639. Shortly before his death,
Guðmundur wrote, “I had eleven siblings, of which two died in
their early years. I was the youngest son. My parents were honest
and godfearing people, hospitable and kind-hearted as much as
they were able despite not being rich” (“Erindringer Fra Missionen I
Skandinavien,” Morgenstjernen, September 15, 1884, 278, translated
from Danish by a research assistant, Timothy Keller).

4. Lavon Brunt Eyring, comp., “Gudmundur’s Life and Young
History,” chap. 1 in Life History, 6. Apparently Eyring estimated
Guðmundur’s birth date was March 23, 1825, as it occurs in the Copenhagen Branch records (Church Archives) under this date. However, as previously noted, Guðmundur was born on March 10, 1825, and his baptism into the Lutheran Church was on March 23, 1825. Reverend Sigfús M. Johnsen, “Þórarinn Hafliðason: fyrsti mormónatrúboðinn í Vestmannaeyjum,” 21 Blik (1960): 114 (trans. George Tate, chair of the Humanities Department at BYU), notes that Þórarinn was also born on March 10, 1825, which would make Þórarinn and Guðmundur exactly the same age.

5. Oddi Parrish records provided by Sigríður Sigurðardóttir and Valgeir Sigurðsson.
9. Erastus Snow was called at the October conference of 1849 to preside over the Scandinavian Mission. See Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 1:103–15, for a bibliographic sketch of his life.
10. “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” Morgenstjernen, September 15, 1884, 279. Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 3:639, quotes Guðmundur stating, “I was baptized in the most devoted sincerity and repentance Feb. 15, 1851 by Peter O. Hansen.” It appears that Guðmundsson may have been a bit confused as to who performed which ordinance when he provided his reminiscences to the Morgenstjernen shortly before his death as noted above. This is evidenced by the fact that the Copenhagen Branch membership records, Church Archives, reveal that Guðmundur was baptized on February 15, 1851, by Peter O. Hansen and confirmed by Christian Christiansen the same day.
On the issue of his conversion, Eyring, *Life History*, 7, indicates that while Guðmundur was taking an evening stroll in the spring of 1850, he saw a group of people listening to a preacher at a street corner. Before he came within range of the preacher’s call, Guðmundur heard an inner voice say, “What that man is saying is true, listen to him.” The preacher was a Latter-day Saint elder, Peter O. Hansen. This suggests that Guðmundsson’s conversion came about through a series of events.


12. The “Manuscript History of the Scandinavian Mission,” vol. 8, 1850–55, July 10, 1851, Church Archives (hereafter cited as “Scandinavian Mission”), notes that Þórarinn was ordained a priest on March 10, 1851. It also indicates that on April 18, 1851, Guðmundur was ordained a teacher.

13. “Scandinavian Mission,” July 10, 1851. According to La Nora Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah* (unpublished document in author’s possession, 1988), 8, the third convert was Jón Jóhannesson, who had also come to Denmark to learn the art of goldsmithing. It is not known why he was not sent forth as a missionary, and little is known of his life in the Church. Allred, *Icelanders*, 9, suggests that he probably moved to Keflavík and notes that it is not known whether he kept his religious faith. Jón Gíslason, “Endurnýjun í vatni og hugsjónum nýrrar aldar. Nýr fórustumaður Mormóna kemur til Vestmannaeyjá,” in part 6 of *Sögur og Sagnir*, 11 (trans. Byron Geslison and Darron Allred), notes that this third convert (Jón Jóhannesson) had indeed moved to Keflavík and was apparently working for a merchant named Duus. Apparently, the missionaries used a portion of the Book of Mormon which had been translated into Danish by Peter O. Hansen, but may not have been quite finished by the time of their departure for the Westmann Islands (see *Millennial Star*, March 15, 1851, 88). The “popular pamphlet” they used was “En Sandheds Rost” (“A Voice of Truth”), printed in Copenhagen in October 1850.
Peter O. Hansen had translated the pamphlet into Danish from the English version written by Erastus Snow (see “Scandinavian Mission,” October 4, 1850). Magnús Bjarnasson, who had lived with Þórarinn Hafliðason for a year before he went to Copenhagen, stated that Þórarinn “came to my house, introduced a conversation about religion, and presenting [presented] me with a little pamphlet entitled ‘En Sandheds Rost.’ He also gave copies of the pamphlet to a number of other inhabitant[s] who were willing to receive them. As soon as I had read the little pamphlet, I believed in the doctrines it advocated and prayed to the Lord to give me an understanding about the truth. In the course of a month’s time I was converted to ‘Mormonism’” (see “Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission [1851–1914],” 1854, Church Archives [hereafter cited as “Icelandic Mission”]).


18. The original letter is housed in the National Archives of Iceland in Reykjavík. A copy of it in Icelandic was provided by Björk Ingimundardóttir, an archivist there. It was translated by Darron Allred.

19. Gísason, Sögur og Sagnir, trans. Byron Geslison and Darron Allred, 11. Jón Gísason also notes that Guðmundur was living with Loftur Jónsson at this time and that Jónsson had probably first heard from Þórarinn about the Church and the arrival of Guðmundur. Kate B. Carter, comp., Our Pioneer Heritage, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 7:492–93, notes that Loftur joined the LDS Church, immigrated to Spanish Fork in 1857, and
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returned to serve a mission to Iceland in 1873. Loftur was later killed in an accident on September 9, 1874, in Palmyra, Utah.

20. Memoirs of Þórhúr Ódríksson in “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” Morgenstjernen, September 15, 1884, 282, trans. Timothy Keller. This article (p. 284) also evidences that Þórhúr converted and was baptized by Loftur Jónsson on February 17, 1855. At the close of the year he left Iceland for Utah.

21. Elder John Thorgeirson, “Scandinavian Mission,” April 1851, indicates that the baptism of this couple led to the charge for the missionaries to no longer proselytize; however, in “The First Icelandic Settlement in America,” comp. Kate B. Carter, 7:492–93, Carter notes that Benedikt and Ragnhildur immigrated to Copenhagen and were then baptized on December 10, 1852. In any case, it appears that it was their conversion which sparked the opposition. Carter further notes that the Hansson family immigrated to America in 1859, but Benedikt died in Omaha, Nebraska, and thus Ragnhildur was left to continue her journey with her two children (Ephraim and Mary), arriving in Utah in 1862. After remaining in Salt Lake City for a time, the Hansson family moved to Spanish Fork and joined the community of other Icelandic Saints who had previously gathered. The Vestmannaeyjar [Westmann Islands] Parish registers substantiate the fact that they emigrated from the Westmann Islands to Copenhagen in 1852 and further note that Benedikt was thirty-five years old and Ragnhildur thirty-seven years old at the time of their emigration (see Index to Persons Emigrating From Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland, to Copenhagen, Utah, Hafnarford, Reykjavik, Seydisfjordur, and America, from 1823–1913, extracted by John Y. Bearnson from Registers GS #12712, parts 1 and 2, GS #12594, parts 1 and 2 for the Genealogical Society, located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1970), 13, 30.

23. In “Erindringer Fra Missionen I Skandinavien,” Morgenstjernen 3, no. 18 (September 15, 1884), 280, Guðmundsson recalls, “Thorarin and four or five others drowned as they were out fishing on a little boat we called in Icelandic ‘Jul’ Christmas. A terrible storm arose and the little boat was engulfed by the sea’s frightfully large waves, and every soul perished. Brother Thorarin had married a young and capable girl which became a bitter enemy of ‘Mormonism’ and uttered many threats towards her husband. Among other things, I remember that she had taken Brother Erastus Snow’s portrait . . . and in her anger had cast it out into the seas, as she imagined it was a graven image that her husband worshipped. It is a misunderstanding when someone says that our friend Thorarin died as an apostate. . . . Quite the contrary, he died firm in the faith. . . . But he had a hard fight because of his young wife, . . . along with the priest and the mother-in-law a bitter hater of our teachings.”


26. “Scandinavian Mission,” April 10, 1851. Three days after the conference adjourned, President Willard Snow wrote in a letter that he had previously appointed Elder John F. F. Dorius on a mission to Iceland during the previous conference in Copenhagen, but Dorius had been imprisoned in Norway along with several other elders. Therefore, Snow had appointed Lorentzen to preside over the Icelandic Mission and recommended that he sail to Iceland as soon as “navigation open[ed] up the way” (see “The Scandinavian Mission,” Millennial Star, May 14, 1853, 313).


28. Jenson, Deseret Semiweekly News, September 25, 1911, 9; Eyring, Life History, 64.

29. According to the Vestmannaeyjar [Westmann Island] Parish Records, Guðmundur left the Westmann Islands for Copenhagen in 1854 (see Index to Persons Emigrating From Vestmannaeyjar,
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Iceland to Copenhagen, Utah, Hafnarford, Reykjavík, Seydisfjordur, and America, from 1823–1913, extracted by John Y. Bearnson from Registers GS #12712, parts 1 and 2, GS #12594, parts 1 and 2 for the Genealogical Society, located in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1970), 11.

34. Marie Garff is sometimes referred to as Mary or Maria in sources used for this chapter.
35. Louis Garff, “Reminiscences of Louis Garff,” 58, holograph, microfilm, Church Archives. The ship manifest shows that the Garff family were among the 522 passengers on this spring voyage of the Westmoreland from Liverpool to Philadelphia. Niels is listed on the customs list as forty-six years old, and Marie is listed as thirty-six. The names of their children are also listed (see “Report or Manifest of All the Passengers Taken on Board the Ship Westmoreland,” Balch Institute, Philadelphia, PA; copy in the possession of the author).
37. Eyring, Life History, 77; The Mormon, May 23, 1857, 3, in Journal History of the Church, April 25, 1857, Church Archives, microfilm copy in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
Although Guðmundur Guðmundsson was one of the first two missionaries to Iceland, he was not the first Latter-day Saint Icelander to reach America. Early converts Samúel Bjarnasson and his wife, Margrét Gísladóttir, along with Helga Jónsdóttir, left the Westmann Islands in 1854 for Liverpool. On January 7, 1855, they embarked on the ship *James Nesmith* and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 7, 1855. According to an unsubstantiated tradition, President Brigham Young directed them to settle in Spanish Fork, feeling they would fit in well with the Danish Saints who had settled there.¹ However, Palmyra (early Spanish Fork region) and Spanish Fork Church membership records provide no evidence for any LDS Scandinavians in this locale prior to the arrival of these Icelandic Saints who were not only the first Mormon Icelanders to gather to Utah, but also the first known Icelanders to immigrate to the United States and establish a permanent settlement.²
The immigration and settlement of these first three Saints paved the way for others to follow. It is estimated that 410 Icelanders immigrated to Utah from 1854 to 1914, just prior to the outbreak of World War I, but this represents only a small fragment of the Scandinavian Saints who gathered during this period. In July of 1855, another Latter-day Saint Icelandic convert named Þórður Diðriksson left his native land for America. He sailed from Liverpool on the December 12, 1855 voyage of the John J. Boyd. Concerning his voyage, he said, “The weather being so bad nearly all the passengers became seasick. I was very sick myself and so afraid I would die that I could not sleep. . . . I often heard the emigrants ask if the Icelander was still alive and the usual answer was, ‘It won’t be long until he is gone.’”

Charles R. Savage reported the following about this voyage:

Notwithstanding that our company consisted of Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Icelanders, Italians, English, Irish, and Scotch, the rules adopted proved efficacious in maintaining a strict “entent cordiale” among us all. The Saints were at the sound of trumpet called to prayer morning and evening. Meetings were also frequently held in the Danish, English, and Italian languages during the voyage. On the whole, we...
enjoyed ourselves first-rate, notwithstanding the many gales and hurricanes we experienced, from the breaking up of the fine weather. . . . Our captain got superstitious on account of the long passage, and ordered that there should be no singing on board; the mate said that all the ships that had preachers on board were always sure of a bad passage.⁶

According to one Latter-day Saint passenger, the captain had remarked to Knud Peterson, “If I hadn’t damned Mormons on board I would have been in New York six weeks ago.” Peterson replied, “If you hadn’t Mormons on board you would have been in hell six weeks ago.”⁷ The group finally reached New York, but because of economic difficulties most of these immigrants had to find employment along the way to Utah.
Þórður worked for several months in the sweltering heat of St. Louis before finally arriving in Salt Lake with the Daniel McArthur Company in the fall of 1856. He then settled in Spanish Fork, where his family was known for their kindness and hospitality, which included assisting other Icelandic immigrants who arrived in Spanish Fork in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁸

In 1857 eleven Icelandic Latter-day Saints gathered together to America. According to an article from the *Morgenstjernen*, two of the eleven “apostatized on the way, but the other nine arrived [in Utah], after one and a half years stay in the States.”⁹ Concerning their journey, Icelandic convert Magnús Bjarnasson wrote the following:

We were now in (1857) eleven “Mormons” on the island (Westmann) and we all secured passage on the schooner “Aldolfina” and sailed for England June 7th, 1857.¹⁰ After a voyage of three weeks we arrived in Liverpool, England, where we remained another three week, but on the 18th of July 1857, we sailed from Liverpool, by freightship “Wyoming” and after spending seven weeks on the Atlantic Ocean, we arrived at Philadelphia, U. S. America, whence we traveled by railroad to St. Louis, Missouri. After spending three days in that city, we boarded a river steamer and sailed up the Mississippi River to Burlington, Iowa, whence we traveled fifty miles inland to the little town of Fairfield . . . where we lived one and a half years, during which we made preparations to journey to Utah. We left Fairfield May 16th, 1859, and arrived in Salt Lake City, Aug. 29th, 1859. We spent about three months in the city, after which we moved to Spanish Fork, Utah County, where we became permanent settlers.¹¹
One of these Icelanders who settled in Spanish Fork was Vigdís Björnsdóttir. In a letter to her homeland, Vigdís wrote, “By Gods grace I am well and have remained so since I came to these valleys, which was early in September in the year 1859, and was well greeted by my brethren, Þórður and Samúel, who came here before me. Nevertheless, after my arrival I lay sick for three months and had good nurses, particularly Þórður and his wife Helga. After that my health has been tolerable.”¹²

Early History of Spanish Fork

Yet neither Vigdís nor the previous Icelanders who had assisted her were the first white people to view the Spanish Fork area. This region had been inhabited by Native Americans for centuries before the white Latter-day Saint settlers, who came in the mid-nineteenth century. Before the coming of Mormons, two Catholic priests and their small Spanish company passed through the territory in search of a direct route that would connect Santa Fe, New Mexico, with Monterey, California. Although they did not reach their destination because they lacked sufficient provisions, they were the first white people to journey by the river that became known as the Spanish Fork River, named after their early expedition. One historian writes, “The first white men ever to look upon the present site of Spanish Fork were two Franciscan Friars, Father Sylvestre Velez de Escalante and Father Francisco Atanasio de Dominguez, who, on September 23, 1776, came through Spanish Fork canyon and camped on the river near the present site of the city.”¹³

In his treatment of Spanish Fork history, Edward Tullidge describes an important council which took place when the Latter-day Saints entered this region to settle permanently:
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When the pioneers came into the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1847, a large number of the Ute Indian nation were encamped in Spanish Fork canyon. As soon as the news reached them of the arrival of the band of pioneers, the Indians held a council to determine what course they would pursue in relation to the whites, whom the young and impatient braves were disposed to look upon as invaders of their country. . . . But Sowiette, who was the great executive chief, or head of the nation, advised the braves to let the Mormon pioneers alone, and pursue a policy of peace toward them, saying perhaps they had, like the Ute nation, been driven from place to place, and had come to the Rocky Mountains for security.¹⁴

This catalytic decision allowed the Saints to settle throughout the Great Basin region in what became known in 1850 as Utah Territory. It was about this same time that an early Salt Lake City merchant named Enoch Reese staked a claim on four hundred acres of land in the Spanish Fork river bottoms, where he built his home. Soon, other white Latter-day Saint settlers followed, and in the spring of 1851 they labored together to bring water from the river for irrigation. A branch of the Church was organized in Spanish Fork, with Stephen Markham serving as the first Spanish Fork branch president.¹⁵

The Town of Spanish Fork Established

The following summer it was decided that there were enough squatters settled near the Spanish Fork River that a town should be formed. The town site was located about three miles west of the modern city of Spanish Fork and was named Palmyra, after the town where the earliest events of Latter-day
Saint Church history occurred.¹⁶ Concerning the establishment of this early settlement, President George A. Smith reported to a British Latter-day Saint periodical: “I have sought out the location for the city of Palmyra, on the Spanish Fork, Utah County. . . . The public square commands a view of all the settlements of Utah Valley . . . and is one of the most delightful spots in the mountains. . . . It is sixty miles from Great Salt Lake City, and now contains sixty families. Stephen Marcham presides.”¹⁷

Although the Palmyra town site was laid out, the area lacked sufficient building materials, so a number of these early pioneer Saints lived in shelters built in the ground called dugouts. Concerning such dwellings, one early settler named George A. Hicks described them as follows:

The dug-outs were places dug in the ground, usually four or five feet deep, with steps leading down into the room from one end, and a roof usually made of willows and mud. The dugouts were quite warm and comfortable during the winter, there being a fire-place in the opposite end of the entrance. They were generally without windows, so in order to get light, the door must be left open, or the open fire depended upon for illumination.¹⁸

Though quite primitive, these dugouts provided needed protection from the elements, yet soon there would be other obstacles to deal with—such as local Native Americans.

The Walker War

In the summer of 1853, soon after the town of Palmyra was established, a skirmish between the Latter-day Saint white settlers and the Ute Indians broke out in the nearby town of Springville. Although the unrest lasted only a year, it served...
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as additional motivation for the Saints to erect forts in Utah. The need for the protection of forts was already apparent to President Brigham Young, who was also at this time serving as the superintendent of Indian Affairs for Utah Territory. Just months before the conflict broke out, Young had taken a spring tour of the Territory and felt strongly impressed to warn the Saints to erect forts in the event of a possible encounter with the local Native Americans. Though warned, the local men of Palmyra paid more attention to their farming than to the fort, and when the Walker War (named after Ute Chief Wakara) broke out, the Palmyra settlers in the Spanish Fork region suffered from Indian attacks.¹⁹

The Walker War ended August 12, 1854, and during the fall of this same year Fort Saint Luke was built at the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon. The following year, immigrants (including the first Icelanders to gather to the United States) swelled the local population and pushed beyond the boundaries of the town of Palmyra.²⁰ During this same year, the Utah territorial legislature granted a charter to the newly created city of Spanish Fork.²¹

The Melding of Two Communities

The following February, Governor Brigham Young recommended that the city of Palmyra merge with the city of Spanish Fork.²² One historian noted that this decision had a significant impact on the local region, as four hundred Palmyra citizens moved to Spanish Fork. Further, “because of this influx in population the city survey had to be increased, the Spanish Fork City Charter was amended to include all the area in the Palmyra Charter. . . . The abandonment of Palmyra also contributed to the ending of the bitter feuding that had gone on

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between the two communities, the disputes mostly involving the pasturage of cattle.”

The need to meet the incoming immigrants also seemed to help weld the community together. One immigrant, Priscilla Merriman Evans, wrote of how the assimilation experience for her and her husband, Thomas, was eased when they entered Spanish Fork in 1856. They were welcomed by local presiding Church officer Stephen Markham and his large family of eleven, who were then living in a dugout. Evans described their very modest living conditions: “It was a very large room built half under ground, with the fireplace in one end, and a dirt floor. Lumber was very scarce and three bedsteads were constructed from poles and rawhide, cut in strips and laced back and forth making a nice springy bed. From the children they had ‘trundle beds,’ and . . . those little beds could be rolled under their mothers bedsteads to utilize space.”

By the end of the first decade of the establishment of the city of Spanish Fork (1855–65), the population had increased to 1,069. “The inhabitants were of English, Scotch, Welsh, and Scandinavian descent, and they came from the Eastern United States, Eastern Canada, England, Iceland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden.” Thus the early Icelandic immigrants came to a city that was small by modern standards, but that was truly an international melting pot. However, just as Thomas and Priscilla Evans had been aided by the Markhams, so Þórður Diðriksson’s family was helpful to Vigdís Björnsdóttir and other Icelanders who faced a sudden transition into the American settlement of Spanish Fork, Utah.

Notes

Salt Lake City they were directed to Spanish Fork where a group of Danish converts had established homes. It was the opinion of President Young that inasmuch as the Danish government was then ruling over Iceland, these two groups would join and live peacefully together. Margrét and Samúel immediately left for their future home, but Helga remained in Salt Lake City until later in the same year. See also Carter, “The First Icelandic Settlement in America,” *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 7:482–83.

2. “Palmyra Branch Record of Members, 1853–1855,” Utah Valley Regional Family History Center, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, lists 371 adult Church members and 122 children who had not yet been baptized. Historian Ron Barney, *One Side By Himself: The Life and Times of Lewis Barney, 1808–1894* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2001), 150, notes, “three-fourths of the ward were American born. Almost 10 percent were native Utahns. One-fifth of the community were from Great Britain, most from England. Three percent were Canadians.” Yet there is no mention of any Scandinavians during this early Palmyra, Utah, period. LDS Church Membership Record for Spanish Fork (1852–91), Utah Valley Regional Family History Center, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, also does not evidence Scandinavian names prior to the arrival of the Icelanders. Andrew Jenson, *History of the Scandinavian Mission* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1927), 72, indicates that the first large company of Scandinavians to immigrate to Utah (September 30, 1853) “were counseled by Brigham Young to settle in different parts of the Territory with people of other nationalities, so as to become useful in developing the resources of the new country. Most of them located in Sanpete Valley, whither other companies from Scandinavia subsequently followed them yearly.” Jenson further notes, “That valley has ever since been known as a stronghold for Scandinavians in Utah.”
CHAPTER 3: IMMIGRATION AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

One local Spanish Fork Saint who lived in the town since its early beginnings (1852) indicated that it was not until 1856 that “there were a large number of Scandinavians [who] came to Spanish Fork.” He adds, “They made an excellent class of citizens, being as a rule, honest, peaceable and industrious” (see George A. Hicks, “A History of Spanish Fork,” transcribed by Roxanne Merrill, 1999, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 24). The Spanish Fork Ward, Utah Stake Manuscript History and Historical Reports, Church Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, contains this entry for 1856: “Among the new settlers who located in Spanish Fork was Elder Svend Larson who had figured so prominently in the Scandinavian Mission before he left his native land (Norway). Quite a number of Scandinavian settlers also located in Spanish Fork that year and following years. Brother Svend Larson was the First Elder who presided over Scandinavian meetings which were commenced in Spanish Fork that year.” Brother Larson subsequently moved to Mount Pleasant, Sanpete County, and Jens Hanson, who located in Spanish Fork at the time of the move (1858), was appointed to preside over the Scandinavian meetings in Spanish Fork, April 29, 1860, by Bishop John L. Butler. William G. Hartley, My Best for the Kingdom: History and Autobiography of John Lowe Butler, a Mormon Frontiersman (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1993), 278, suggests that these first three Icelanders who settled in Spanish Fork in 1855 may have been met by John Lowe Butler, who had been laboring at Fort Bridger during the summer of 1855. Butler became not only a neighbor to these Icelandic Saints but later served as their bishop. The LDS Church Membership Record for Spanish Fork (1852–91) discloses that the first time Icelandic names occur in the record is not until early 1861, which then evidences various kinds of Church donations, which include several references to Sæmund Bjarnason and other early Icelandic Saints who followed.
3. Research list in author’s possession compiled in the spring of 2000 by Bliss Anderson, a member of the Icelandic Association of Utah. This list reveals that 208 out of 410 of the Icelanders who immigrated to Utah were from the Westmann Islands, located just twelve miles from the southwestern coast of Iceland. The Westmann Islands are a group of fourteen islands, of which only one (Heimaey) is inhabited. In the summer of 2000, a monument was erected on this inhabited island to commemorate those Icelanders who had immigrated to Utah. This island represents less than 1 percent of the total landmass of Iceland, which is nearly 40,000 square miles, slightly smaller than England (see Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 2, 13, 16). Icelandic Mission president Loftur Bjarnason wrote in an article entitled “Traveling in Iceland,” Millennial Star, May 12, 1904, 302, that the uninhabited islands were used mainly for sheep and that the largest island (Heimaey) had a population of only eight hundred people. He added, “About two-thirds of those that have embraced the gospel from this country [during a fifty year period from 1854 to 1904] have come from this place, and indeed we feel the same spirit of goodwill toward our people that has ever existed here.” Although his estimate is a little high, it is impressive that nearly half of the total number of Icelandic immigrants to Utah were from this small island and that one-fourth of the total number of inhabitants of Heimaey were converted. It should also be pointed out that although not all of those who gathered were Latter-day Saints at the time of embarkment, many later joined the Church in Spanish Fork. Further, some of those who gathered to Utah left the Church and chose instead to return to the Lutheran Church, the prominent religious denomination in Iceland. In any case, most of the total number remained active Latter-day Saints.

4. William Mulder, Homeward to Zion (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1957), 107, states, “Altogether, of the 46,497 converts which Scandinavia yielded between 1850 and 1905, 50 percent
were Danish, slightly less than 36 percent were Swedish, and not quite 14 percent were Norwegian. Of the 22,653 of these ‘members of record’ who emigrated, 56 percent were Danish, a little over 32 percent were Swedish, 11 percent were Norwegian, and a fraction Icelandic.”


8. *Autobiographical Sketch of Theodur Didrickson*, Church Archives, 7. See also “The Life of Einer Erickson,” 21–23, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, wherein Erickson notes on his arrival in Spanish Fork, on July 18, 1878, “I was gladly received by my Family at Elder Theodur Dedricsens home.”


10. The most common route for Latter-day Saint emigrants to take from their homeland was to embark from Reykjavík and voyage to Granton, Scotland, where they either traveled by sail or rail to Liverpool and joined other European Latter-day Saint converts who crossed the Atlantic together to Zion.

11. This is a narrative included in the Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 1857, which apparently came from a letter Magnús Bjarnasson submitted to assistant Church historian Andrew Jenson in 1926. According to the *Deseret News*, March 2, 1926, the Manuscript History of the Iceland Mission was among “the last mission histories to be compiled.” Although these early Latter-day Saint Icelandic immigrants settled in Spanish Fork, Guðmundur Guðmundsson dwelt for a time in Salt Lake City, as there were greater opportunities for him to practice his craft of goldsmithing there. Guðmundur's family
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also migrated to other Utah locations, which included South Weber, Farmington, Lehi, and Draper. The Guðmundsson family lived for a year in Sacramento, California (1868–69), because one of the sons of Marie Garff needed medical treatment. For more information on Guðmundur’s family migrations, see Fred E. Woods, “Fire on Ice: The Conversion and Life of Guðmundur Guðmundsson,” Brigham Young University Studies 39, no. 2 (2000): 56–72.

12. Letter of Vigdí Björnsdóttir from Spanish Fork to an anonymous friend in the Westmann Islands, August 28, 1866, National Library of Iceland, Archives Department, Reykjavík, Iceland. Catalogue # Lbs. 2679, 8vo, 1; see also the published version of this letter in Finnr Sigmundsson, ed., Vesturfarar skrifa heim: frá islenskum mormónum í Utah (Reykjavík, Iceland: Setberg, 1975), 40–43. By this time Þórður Diðriksson was married to Helga Jónsdóttir, who had immigrated to Spanish Fork with Samuel and Margrét Bjarnason in 1855. The Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 1857, notes that no known groups of Icelandic Saints emigrated from Iceland between 1858–72, nor were any missionaries sent to Iceland until the arrival of Magnús Bjarnasson and Loptur Johnson [Loftur Jónsson] in 1873. They had emigrated with the 1857 group.


15. Warner, The History of Spanish Fork, 31–33. The title “branch president” is an LDS term referring to an ecclesiastical officer who presides over a small congregation.


17. Letter written from Salt Lake City by George A. Smith to Samuel W. Richards, December 26, 1852, “Prosperity of the Settlements—Location of a large sugar manufactory,” Millennial Star, April 30, 1853, 286.


21. Richard N. Holzafpel, *A History of Utah County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1999), 67, notes that the city charter was granted January 17, 1855.


25. Allred, *Spanish Fork*, 21. Concerning where the various groups of Spanish Fork immigrants lived, Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 20, presents specific divisions: “The Welch [Welsh] congregated in the northwest section of town; the English in the southwest, and the Danish in the northeast. The Icelanders when they came settled in the southeast, a section which up to that time had found little favor with other residents because of its poorer, rocky soil.” Concerning the general demographics for several decades which followed, Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 824, adds,
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“The population of Spanish Fork was . . . 2,304 in 1880; 3,327 in 1900, and 4,509 in 1930.”

26. A note inserted apparently by an E. Iver in the “Autobiographical Sketch of Thordur Didricksson,” Church Archives, 7, points out that “the Dedrickson home was noted for its generous hospitality and there many of the emigrants were taken in and kept like family members until they could get settled.”
Letters from LDS Icelanders in Spanish Fork to family and friends in their homeland during the mid- to late-nineteenth century provide an interesting sketch of daily life for these distant immigrants. For example, in 1862, as the American Civil War was in process, Loftur Jónsson wrote to his friend Páll Sigurðsson: “Once more I take the pen in my hand to let you, my noble countrymen, who desire to know of me, know how I or we are doing here in the Salt Sea Valleys. We are doing very well. We live here peacefully and quietly while others here in America . . . kill and destroy one another. We rejoice in the redeeming gospel, which we have received.”

Jónsson also writes candidly, though optimistically, about the transition into a new country and gives details concerning provisions and the wages he was receiving in comparison to those of his native homeland:

When I came to this place, where I am now, I had spent all my money I had for myself and other poor folk who could
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not get here on their own accord, but I hope God will give me life and health, that there may not be many years until I have regained all such and maybe more, because I make my own bread in my own land and make there besides 2 to 3 dollars during the day building things for others. One dollar is worth about 11 marks, 7 schillings. These would be considered a good days wages in our land. If the truth be told, food is more expensive here, but the quality is also much better.²

Three years later in another letter to Sigurðsson, Jónsson wrote of the prosperity of his native countrymen, notwithstanding his concern for local Native Americans in the Spanish Fork region:

All of the Icelanders live in this little town, all of good health, and prosper both spiritually and temporally. . . . The wild Indians are rather restless at this time, which has led to them stealing cattle so we sought to retrieve it from them, which did not go well, a few of the men, both white and Indian, were killed. But even though they are bad, the Indians, one never needs to fear them in the cities, because there they do not usually come when they are restless.³

On Christmas Day of 1869, Loftur again wrote his Icelandic friend, revealing his loneliness, as his wife had recently passed away. His letter also discloses his desire to have intimate companionship with a native Icelander:

I am a widower now. My wife died October 16th, . . . and I have missed her very much. . . . I wish now that one woman from Iceland was here with me to take her place and dispel my sorrow, for though there be many girls and unmarried women, I find they do not suit me as well as one from my
fatherland, because I feel more love for them than I do the inhabitants of any other nation. But this feeling will not desist unless I go myself to get one, and perhaps they will fear my faith and I would have to return again empty handed, and such a trip would be expensive to risk.⁴

Four years later Loftur returned to Iceland on a mission, and while there he converted an Icelandic woman named Halldóra, whom he brought back to Utah with him in 1874 and married. Unfortunately, this same year he died in an accident near Palmyra.⁵

A Valuable Citizen

Another Icelander who paints a vivid picture of life in Spanish Fork during this period is Vigdís Björnsdottir. As noted, Vigdís arrived in Spanish Fork in 1859. She was well known in the community, due primarily to her medical training previously acquired in Copenhagen, which included a course in obstetrics. Kate B. Carter wrote: “Immediately upon establishing her residency in Spanish Fork, Vigdís became doctor, midwife and nurse, not only among her own people, but to hundreds of other families in this small pioneer community. The medical skill she had acquired in Denmark was put to good use in setting bones, treating . . . diseases and attending to the births of hundreds of infants.”⁶

Halldóra Árnadóttir was introduced to Mormonism by Loftur Jónsson, and they later married in 1874.

Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah
In a letter dated August 28, 1866, Vigdís describes to an anonymous Icelandic friend in her homeland the daily routine of farm life in Spanish Fork and gives a glimpse of the economy of a small rural town:

About a year and a half after settling I married a widower named William Holt. He had three boys; the oldest is eleven, but the youngest six years old. We are well off, 20 cattle, 50 sheep, one horse and a great land. . . . We slaughter two pigs annually, and they weigh on average 300 pounds each. We lack nothing but you and my relatives and friends and countrymen. We have such a good garden; in it grow many kinds of apples and sugar cane (syrup is made from it), besides many more kinds of fruit, whose name you know not. Last year we got 350 pots of syrup, and the apples are dried and used all year round. I have 50 chickens and we have eggs both to eat and sell. A dozen eggs (12 eggs) cost 60 shillings. Butter is also at a very high price; at times the pound is at 9 marks. There are four stores in this town, in each of them we can get many necessities, but many things are expensive, but it evens out, because they receive graciously. Coffee costs two dollars and sugar is a little less expensive, a yard (1½ alin) of white linen two dollars, but a yard of mixed colors 80 shillings. Tools and wood working equipment is also very expensive. A day’s wages are on average 2 measures.7

Vigdís Björnsdóttir, also known as “Aunt Wickie,” received medical training in Copenhagen and was a great aid to the Icelandic Saints who came to Utah. Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah
A description of the layout of the town of Spanish Fork, and of how news traveled, is also courtesy of Vigdis:

Towns are organized in a way that some streets lay from east to west and others lay across them north and south. On both sides of these streets are straight water trenches. The gardens are watered from them. By the trenches are planted decorative trees to sit under in the sun. Between the streets are square blocks (4 gardens in each block), and the houses stand each in their own corner, which looks simply marvelous. The postman comes three times a week. He brings us newspapers and letters from various countries. There are also a couple of mills in our town, one to grind corn, and the other to saw. Both of them are driven by water. There
are two machines here that thresh wheat and they are horse powered. There are six machines here that grind the sugar trees, from which syrup is made, and they are powered by water. There are also machines here that cut grass and wheat, which are horse-powered, and it costs more to get your labors worth from them than it does in those that are water-powered, because a horse and a muzzle are expensive.⁸

Finally, this small, blue-eyed, brown-haired country doctor, known affectionately as “Aunt Wickie,”⁹ concludes her letter with a testimony of her faith:

I am happy and well contented to have traveled from my fatherland for the faith that I gained that the pure gospel was revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith in the latter days and I know with a perfect knowledge that I am not being fooled by men, which have no authority from God, rather I can bear my own testimony that this is God’s true church and no other exists that he recognizes, and these are the latter days and Jesus’ coming is near, for which his pure gospel shall be preached to all nations, and the signs, which he said would be before his coming, are manifest daily. Now, if you my relatives and friends and countrymen, whom I wish everything good, should have opportunity to receive this learning, which those so called Mormons teach, I admonish you to do so, for it is the only way to be saved and there is no other. Many lies have persisted and have been told of this people, for example that those who come here are taken in slavery, but were there as much freedom where you are as there is here, you would love it. All who so wish may dwell here and of whatever faith live undisturbed, and if any may fall from our faith, they may remain here if they want.¹⁰
The practice of witnessing to the homeland loved ones of the truths of the restored gospel, as well as describing the pleasant cultural symmetry that existed in Spanish Fork during the decade of the 1880s, was not unique to Aunt Wickie. A series of letters by Þorsteinn Jónsson to his friend Jón Jónsson Borgfirðingur,¹¹ who remained in Iceland, confirm this pattern.

True Friendships

Finnur Sigmundsson has noted that both of these men had previously worked together as police officers in Reykjavík and had even been witnesses in the fall of 1879, when two LDS missionaries (Jón Evyindsson and Jakob Jónsson) were compelled to stand before a city hearing and were told to leave the city. Bishop Jón Helgason referred to Þorsteinn as “a mighty man to behold and very diligent, but he was caught up in the snares of the Mormon missionaries, which came here, and became a Mormon. Shortly he resigned his post and left for Utah.”¹² Excerpts from these varied letters illustrate wonderfully the cultural rhythms of Spanish Fork as well as the deep Icelandic friendships that could not be broken regardless of distance between countries and religious orientation.

The first letter of Þorsteinn to Jón is dated November 4, 1883. Þorsteinn writes of his arrival and assimilation into the new Utah community:

Apart from our seasickness, our trip went exceptionally well, but since we arrived here every day has been better than the other. Everyone has been good to us, both English and Danish, and whomever we have gotten to know. We now have most of what we need of tools to use outdoor as well as in, and overall we feel as good as we did at home when we were at our best, except we have still not gotten ourselves a
cow, even though we have been offered some. Apparently it is good for everyone here that bother to work, but others would have nothing to do here. My Sigriður worked for a week harvesting potatoes and got 3 barrels in return as payment, but Stebbi got 3 “skefur” [measures]. She has 7 chickens and 2 pigs. I have worked for a month doing construction and gotten about a dollar and half per day. For some time, I have been threshing wheat with a threshing machine and got a half a barrel of wheat per day. I wish all poor laborers were come hereto, to this town, Spanish Fork, rather than to all the other towns in the area. . . .

It seems as if the average wage of people here is very good, both in monetary means and well-being, and people here are over all better off health-wise than at home. As far as I am concerned, my Sigriður is feeling much better than she was at home. The Lord has blessed us with many quality means for our bodies and souls since we have arrived I am much better off and am more at peace walking these streets than I was in Reykjavík. I cannot thank the Lord enough for being here and being somewhat prepared for the winter, and I have stopped longing to be back in Iceland again.¹³

The following portion of this letter was written about two weeks later (November 19, 1883), wherein Þorsteinn notes:

We have been aided by the English and the Danish. I could have cried thinking of you at home, where you make so little and where the pay is so low. Our daily sustenance is wheat-bread, potatoes, pork, meat, butter, pork-lard and all sorts of fruits from the trees. . . . There are many here that have two estates, one here in town, but the other out in the countryside. . . . Nobody has a laborer, no matter how rich he is, whether he is superior or inferior, rather they let the horse
teams work for them, machines, plows and other things like it. . . . Now I am better off here than I was in Reykjavik.¹⁴

The final section of this same letter ends with a sincere plea to his friend Jón, beckoning him to leave their cold native country for a better land in Utah:

I wish you were settled here with your family, and I cannot feel sorry for your sons to be working for you. . . . I am certain that you and your family need to gnaw the ice, as people seem to do in the old country. I come to tears thinking about my poor countrymen, that don’t have anything else to tread on but rocks, instead of cornfields and other kinds of vegetation. Oh, that I were about twenty. Oh, you young men; are you going to stand there idle on those frozen rocks, without thought, without action, yes, frozen to the core in both soul and body, and search not out the warmer parts of the world, where you can become men of doing, both for yourselves and for others.¹⁵

Vivid Descriptions and Grand Celebrations

A second letter written several months later provides further details into transportation, communication, and cultural items of interest in the Spanish Fork setting:

There are three shopping areas, two butchers, two bars, one theater, one church, four sawmills, one meal-mill, which is water-powered, and it is used a lot. Then they are building a woodworking machine, which is supposed to be water-powered, that makes windows, doors and all kinds of things. There are two trains that run here, one right below the town, but the other right above it, and the wagons run to and fro on them many times a day, so much so that one can almost
expect news on the hour, yes, even every minute with the telegraph. [Yet] no one here has any Icelandic newspapers. . . . Seeds are quite expensive here like some of these trees, but we, through the grace of our Lord, have become so well respected, both of the Danish, English, American, and Icelandic, that we have been given all of it. I was amazed at one thing last Saturday night. In a meeting that was held, my testimony from the old country was read verbatim by an American man, which is a counselor to the bishop in Spanish Fork. It is good to do well and to receive a reward for your actions. . . .
I am as content now as I ever can be with my circumstances and I hope that I may live here the rest of my days in peace and trust that I will not have to travel to Iceland ever
again, rather remain here in peace and enjoy all the blessing
of the Lord.¹⁶

In letters from the summer of 1884, Þorsteinn described
the festivities of July 24, when Utah Saints celebrated the an-
niversary of the vanguard company led by Brigham Young that
entered the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847:

The biggest celebration of the year is on the 24th of this
month. Then everyone will dress up in the costume they
brought from their fatherland or mother-earth. Old man
Hansen . . . will appear in his uniform and two medallions
for his bravery as a general. He is Danish. Then you can see
how high people have been in their homeland. I will also ap-
pear all dressed in my uniform and claim my respect from
the towns people. Do you think I will be proud?¹⁷

In a letter that was written shortly after this holiday ended,
Þorsteinn explained in great detail the Spanish Fork July 24 an-
nual pioneer parade which the Icelanders and other Latter-day
Saints participated in. This letter reveals his and his wife's great
desire to bring honor to their native country. Due to its vivid
description, it is included below in its entirety:

There was a great festival held here the 24th of July, naturally
the biggest one of the year. Then they call on a few men of
every nation to show their national costumes and various
traits, to display ones status and crafts, which they brought
with them from home. Of the Icelanders they called Þórður
Diðriksson to bring six Icelandic persons. He called my wife
and I, Gísli Bjarnason and Margrét, the wife of Samuel,
Eiríkur Ólafsson and Margrét, who was in the school.

At eight o'clock in the morning everyone was to assemble
by the city hall, and there everyone was ordered into groups.
First were the English and the American, Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, German, all in wagons, which were decorated with cloths and upholstery of various colors. There were also 24 young men and women on horseback, riding side by side, the boys all dressed in black on gray horses, but the girls on brown horses all dressed in white. This was to represent the 24 days of the month. Then they all rode along the main street, three times around so that all could see, because the sidewalk on both sides was so crowded. Then we went just outside of town to a forest, which was planted for pleasure. There were held speeches and singing, then lunch was served and we ate, and there after we played games. Those who had been officers or lieutenants came in their costumes, each in their own rank that they had held at home. I came in my policeman uniform and it was considered striking. My wife was in her national costume, which was considered the most beautiful costume they had ever seen, and I think most of the people that were present came to look at the costume, it was thought to be so significant. The Icelanders also made a symbol for the group from blue linen, with a falcon on one side, and a Viking ship on the other side, according to Friðþjólfur. This was also considered beautiful. The Icelanders also carried a symbol made out of white linen with big blue inscription, saying: Iceland delights in you, Zion. I wish it were so; however, it meant the Icelanders that are here and all of those who might come. They also showed how they looked when they first arrived, walking with their belongings in handcarts, with their children barefoot, torn and tattered, crying because of hunger and exhaustion. But now they have lands and acres. But those who come now, come like soldiers in covered wagons, but may in return slave for the others, because they’ve made the lands so expensive that
you can scarcely buy them. It is not the Lord’s doctrine that this should be so. This festival is to commemorate that the restoration of the Church, the 24th of July. The wife and I sought to bring as much honor as possible to our nation. It is considered a great honor to all, irrespective of their nationality.¹⁸

*Pride and Prejudice*

Although the parade paints a picture of LDS unity irrespective of one’s homeland, a bit of cultural conflict still apparently existed, as evidenced by yet another letter Þorsteinn wrote shortly before Christmas of this same year. Among other things, Þorsteinn described his contentions with an Englishman and an American who compared the houses and buildings in the Spanish Fork region with those in Iceland. Apparently he is on the defensive when he writes the following to his dear Icelandic friend Jón: “Thus, I wish I had the latest and most beautiful picture of Reykjavik, because they say there is no log house as ugly as the prettiest house in Iceland.”¹⁹ He goes on to express his frustrations:

I didn’t like it when the English talked badly about Iceland around the dinner table, saying that they all lived on horse sausages, which they call hot dogs, of course all without exception, yes and seal meat. They say it is a poor people, or as they say “púr pipil.” I have often contended harshly with them regarding education in the country, the land itself and the people in general.²⁰
Economics

Þorsteinn also confirms the strong determination of himself, his wife and other Icelanders to aid their countrymen: “We are collecting money to aid Icelanders in a group of 14 stranded north of here that wish to get here on account of their faith, which have never had missionaries and have arrived at Helena Montana Territory, after having traveled there on one man’s money, but there they have run out.”²¹

The following spring, Þorsteinn explained to Jón the employment opportunities coming to his hometown: “Yesterday . . . a man came here to this house to recruit people to shear sheep, and he traveled 50 miles to do so, because he had seen sheep that we the Icelanders cut last year, and he thought it was done so well that he wanted the same people to shear his flock.” He further noted, “I will take my Sigríður with me to shear, and we’ll probably be there all of June. There we will get six cents for each sheep. I estimate that I will shear 40 a day. That is 2 dollars and 40 cents a day. And you buy everything for food but meat, which you get free. It is good pay for those who are pretty quick.”²²

As the year ended, Þorsteinn explained to Jón that Sigríður had switched her labors from sheep shearing to shucking corn: “My beloved wife is shucking corn, which is to peel the leaves from the corncobs; she gets one seventh of everything she shucks.” In an optimistic tone, Þorsteinn also includes the fact that “all the Icelanders that I know and are here, are doing well. I know that no one here can help feel anything else but well if he is willing to work, despite the lack of money; everything you do is paid in what you would purchase anyway, if you were paid in money.”²³

As the new year of 1886 dawned, Þorsteinn continued to describe his life in Spanish Fork optimistically: “I live a very
CHAPTER 4: LIFE IN SPANISH FORK AND OTHER UTAH REGIONS

good and peaceful life; have enough of everything, a good and quaint house. I lack nothing, other than my relatives and friends turned to the right faith and settled here. . . . I can hardly get more provisions into my house than what is already there, and it is even bigger than the one I had in Reykjavik.”²⁴ At the same time, Þorsteinn cautions his dear friend, “You should not believe what you hear or read in the newspapers, because they have piled together such farfetched heaps of lies about this people.”²⁵

Demographics

About two months later Þorsteinn provided a general lay-out of Spanish Fork for Jón:

There are close to four thousand inhabitants in this little town. I don’t know what it was when I arrived, but there were not a hundred Icelanders, but now there are 150 Icelandic persons and a few children half native. There are 12 threshing machines, 2 mills, 3 grocers, 1 butcher, no liquor store, 2 shoe stores, 3 stores that make harnesses, 2 lumber markets, 6–7 saw mills.²⁶

An increase in these demographics increased by fall of this same year, thus impacting the industry of the small Utah town. Þorsteinn noted in a letter to Jón written November 22, 1886:

Many Icelanders have come this summer and have had enough employment until now and some will probably have one all winter. Those who didn’t know much except the country at home have enough for the winter. I think everyone is doing well, and many have arrived despite difficult circumstances.²⁷
Porsteinn was correct in his observation, inasmuch as more Icelanders immigrated to Utah in 1886 than any other year.²⁸ Historian Jónas Thor maintains that more Icelanders immigrated to North America during this year than any other. He attributes the record high immigration of 1886 and for the entire decade of the 1880s to unusually cold weather, which had a serious impact on Icelandic farmers.²⁹

By 1888 Spanish Fork was bulging at her borders. Porsteinn, writing on New Year’s Day, noted the following changes owing to the growth of the area:

Cows have gone down in price, also horses, but all lands and plots increase from year to year and that is due to the many people that have gathered together in these fair weathered valleys. . . . There are about 150 Icelanders in this town, both old and young. Construction has increased a lot since I arrived here. We, the Icelanders, are building ourselves a church out of wood, so we can have services in our own language, for there are many who do not understand English and there could be more coming, but four have been building this house this summer. Many have had good employment this year shearing sheep, threshing, among many other things, for example women have been plucking fruit off trees and other things like it. My wife attended the same plot as last year, and got much more from it than last year, almost 50 dollars. She also sheared and earned about 20 dollars apart from many other things. . . . I spent a month on the highway this spring and went from there, 30 miles, to Nephi, shearing sheep for another month, and again up to Scofield about 60 miles south.³⁰

Such an influx not only required more town construction, but seems to have necessitated that some Icelanders and
undoubtedly other Spanish Fork citizens secure employment elsewhere. The distance for some required moving to a new location, such as Scofield, as previously noted.

*Spanish Fork Icelanders Migrate to Scofield, Utah, and Alberta, Canada*

Scofield, which lay in Carbon County, was a magnet not only for Icelanders but also for many other immigrants needing employment in the late nineteenth century. Allred writes, “The necessity of good-paying jobs drove some of the Icelanders to mining towns in the Scofield area. . . . Some worked in the mines and some worked on the railroad, and although these men hadn’t been trained either as miners or railroad workers
in Iceland (even today there is no mining in Iceland . . . nor are there railroads), . . . they soon adapted to the work.”³¹

But as Allred notes, “Many did not stay very long, and after 1900 most of the Icelanders had left Scofield and gone elsewhere.”³²

Although correct in determining when most had left this area, Allred omits an explanation for this fact. On May 1, 1900, the Winter Quarters Number Four mine just west of the town of Scofield exploded. One of the worst mine disasters in United States history, it officially claimed the lives of about two hundred.³³ The impact of this explosion not only advanced decisions for having greater safety for miners, but it also encouraged Icelanders in this mining region, such as Jón Pétur Jónsson, to leave. In addition, other Spanish Fork Icelandic families chose to migrate farther north to southern Alberta, Canada, primarily for better employment conditions. Allred points out such families as Pétur Valgarðsson, Jón Eyvindsson, Águst Ingjaldson, Kristján Guðnason, Jóhannes Kristjánsson, Guðmundur Guðmundsson, Jón Arnoddson, Vigdís Jónsdóttir Árnasson and Jón Pétur Jónsson moved to the towns of Raymond and Taber in southern Alberta.³⁴

Pétur Valgarðsson served a mission to Iceland in 1882. He moved to Taber, Alberta, Canada, and lived there for a time before returning to Spanish Fork. Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah
A Cluster of Icelanders in Cleveland, Utah

Other Icelanders also chose to migrate, but most elected to stay in Utah. One preferred destination of choice for a small cluster of migrating LDS Icelanders was a town in Emory County named Cleveland, after President Grover Cleveland. According to historian Edward Geary, Cleveland had its early beginnings in the spring of 1885 when two families, the Algers and the Oviatts, arrived to settle in the area. In the same year Samuel Alger surveyed the much-needed route of the
Cleveland Canal, which not only supplied needed water but also attracted workers, and thus more families.³⁵

In yet another letter by Þorsteinn Jónsson in January 1886, he mentions, “Jakob [B. Jónsson] is moved from here to Castle Valley.”³⁶ Jakob B. Jónsson did settle with his family in the Castle Valley region, yet Jakob was not the first Icelander to migrate to Cleveland. Allred writes, “In 1885 Halldór Jónsson moved his family from Spanish Fork to Cleveland, where he purchased a farm. He contributed his labor to the building of the canal, which was finished in 1888.”³⁷ Two other Icelanders moved their families to Cleveland in 1889. In his life history, Einar Erlíksson recalled:

In February 1889 I together with bro J.[Jon] J. Thorderson went over to Cleveland to look at that new settled place[.] we left Price on foot in the afternoon but cam to Cleveland next morning at Sunrise. We bargen for 40 acres of land lots of Mr. Clousin for $100.00 eats 40 without water[,] we then went back to Price on foot and home the same day[,] we sold our home in Spanish Fork for $400.00. . . . In July 1889 we moved to Cleveland where we started to make us anew home.³⁸

Allred explains that other Icelanders moved to Cleveland during this period, such as Sveinn, the father of Jón J. Þórðarson, in 1890. She adds, “The following year; [Jakob B.] Jónsson, Þórarinn Bjarnason, Þorsteinn Jónsson also settled in Cleveland about the same time.”³⁹

Evidence that Þorsteinn had arrived in Cleveland by the end of 1890, as well as his motive for moving from Spanish Fork, derives from a letter he wrote from Cleveland in late December 1890: “I am still above ground and doing well, but I have moved like the devil a hundred miles west of where I
was. I had to go somewhere I could buy land because I have so many animals. I bought thirty acres of land for a dollar and a quarter an acre, so I have spent every effort to building a home.” In this same letter he notes that a few other Icelanders lived in the area, specifically Einar [Eriksson] and his son Einar, as well as Jakob B. Jónsson, his wife Sigríður, and three other Icelanders he does not mention by name.⁴⁰

About eighteen months later, Þorsteinn described Cleveland in the early summer of 1892: “Most people like me don’t have a lot of money. The settlement is new and everyone is pretty much starting off fresh, there is no train here thus no paid labor. . . . There is no news of this place, good weather, enough water, because the snow melted late due to an unusually cold spring. The fields look good; . . . sawmills have decreased . . . there should only be two in each county.” He then concluded his letter in a positive tone, declaring, “I am in my age happy to be here and to own a good and beautiful land, filled with animals, good and beautiful cows, good and beautiful horses, and now four beautiful steers, although some are young. This is much more enjoyable than walking the streets of Reykjavik.”⁴¹

Notes

1. Loftur Jónsson (in Spanish Fork) to Páll Sigurðsson (in the Westmann Islands), February 21, 1862, National Library of Iceland, Archives Department, Reykjavík, Iceland; catalogue # Lbs. 487, fol. 1; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim: frá islenskum mormónum í Utah (Reykjavik, Iceland: Setberg, 1975), 15.

2. Jónsson to Sigurðsson, February 21, 1862; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 15–16.

3. Jónsson to Sigurðsson, April 27, 1865; catalogue # Lbs. 487, fol. 1–2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 19.
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4. Jónsson to Sigurðsson, December 25, 1869; catalogue # Lbs. 487, fol. 1; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 26.

5. Kate B. Carter, comp., “The First Icelandic Settlement in America,” 7:492–93, notes that Halldóra was the “daughter of Arni Asgrimsson from Undirhraun Medallandi, Iceland.” Carter also notes that Loftur died on September 9, 1874 (p. 493).


7. Vigdís Björnsdóttir (in Spanish Fork) to an anonymous friend in the Westmann Islands, August 28, 1866, National Library of Iceland, Archives Department; catalogue # Lbs. 2679, 8vo, 2–3; see also Sigumundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 40–41.

8. Björnsdóttir to friend, August 28, 1866, 8vo, 5–6; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 41–42.


10. Björnsdóttir to friend, August 28, 1866; catalogue # Lbs. 2679, 8vo, 6–8; see also Sigumundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 42–43. My research assistant, Mark J. Sanderson, in an unpublished paper titled “The Old Lutheran Church in Spanish Fork,” 4, has noted that “while several Icelanders left the LDS Church, they maintained close ties with LDS Icelanders, and the Lutheran Church became a community center for Icelanders.” This close relationship has also been mentioned to the author by a number of people who have Icelandic roots and who are currently members of the Icelandic Association of Utah. For information on the history of Lutherans in Utah, see Ronnie L. Stellhorn, “A History of the Lutheran Church in Utah” (master’s thesis, Utah State University). See also Thomas Edgar Lyon, “Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1865–1900” (PhD diss., University of Utah), 221–55, on contact between Lutherans and Mormons throughout Utah during the late nineteenth century.
11. Þorsteinn Jónsson to Jón Jónsson Borgfirðingur, February 28, 1886, National Library of Iceland, Archives Department; catalogue # Lbs. 102, fol. B (w-ö), 1–2 provides evidence that it took about three and a half weeks (twenty-four days) for a letter to travel between Spanish Fork, Utah, and Reykjavík, Iceland (see also Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 93).


13. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur (in Iceland), November 4, 1883; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 1–2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 53–55.

14. Second part of letter by Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, November 4, 1883 (letter continued November 19, 29, 1883); catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 1–2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 55–57.

15. Final part of letter by Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, December 12, 1883; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 1–2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 58.

16. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, March 18, 1884; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 2–4; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 63–64.

17. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, June 15, 1884; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 3; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 68. Inasmuch as Þorsteinn mentioned this holiday (known in modern times among Latter-day Saints as “Pioneer Day”) was about to occur on the “24th of this month,” perhaps he made a mistake in dating this letter, and it was really written on July 15, 1884. Furthermore, Þorsteinn notes that this was the “biggest celebration of the year.” In a previous letter (the fourth part of the first letter he wrote to Jón), dated December 28, 1883, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 59, Þorsteinn wrote to Jón, “They don’t celebrate Christmas here much, except for the Icelandic, but that is because they say the birth of the Savior did not occur that day, and is that true. Some say that it is the 6th of
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April.” The suggestion that Christ may have been born on April 6, instead of the traditional date of December 25, stems from a book of LDS scripture called the Doctrine and Covenants, section 20, verse 1, which notes that the day the restored Church was organized was April 6, 1830, “one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh.” However, not all LDS Church leaders have agreed with this position. For discussion regarding both sides of this interpretation, see Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary, Book 1* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 349–50.

18. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, August 4, 1884; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 1–3; see also Sigmundsson, *Vesturfarar skrifa heim*, 69–71.


20. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, “Monday before Christmas, 1884”; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 2–3; see also Sigmundsson, *Vesturfarar skrifa heim*, 109. Þorsteinn tells Jón, “I am always to hold Icelanders to honor, saying that they live in houses on the ground, but not in holes in the ground like Americans say they do, and Sigfús Eymundsson has helped me in that regard by sending me three pictures of Reykjavik.” It should also be noted that Eymundsson’s photographic collection is probably considered the finest for this period in Iceland. It is housed at the National Museum of Iceland.


22. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, May 2, 1885; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ö), 3–4; see also Sigmundsson, *Vesturfarar skrifa heim*, 83–84. According to Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 106, Þorsteinn
was married to an Icelandic woman named Sigridur Jonsdottir, born in 1846 in Reykjavik. In 1880, Sigridur joined the LDS Church and three years later immigrated with her husband and son to Spanish Fork.

23. Jons to Borgfirdingur, “The first Sunday of winter,” [late December], 1885; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 3; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 86.

24. Jons to Borgfirdingur, January 3, 1886; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 89.

25. Jons to Borgfirdingur, January 3, 1886; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 2. Latter-day Saints were receiving much negative press in the United States and internationally due to prosecution for the charge of unlawful cohabitation.

26. Jons to Borgfirdingur, begun on February 28, 1886. This second portion of the letter was written March 8, 1886; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 4; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 96.

27. Jons to Borgfirdingur, November 22, 1886; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 2; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 98.

28. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, December 31, 1886, reveals that 1886 was also the peak year for baptisms in the history of the Icelandic Mission since it had opened for proselytizing in 1851. Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 20, notes sixty-three Icelanders immigrated to Spanish Fork in 1886. The research of noted Icelandic genealogist Bliss Anderson suggests that as many as seventy-eight gathered to Utah during this one year.


30. Jons to Borgfirdingur, January 1, 1888; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-o), 1–3; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 102–3. From another letter written December 28, 1888, to
Jon in Sigmundsson, *Vesturfarar skrifa heim*, 108, Þorsteinn notes still another form of employment for his wife: “Sigríður has started attending bees and raising honey. This is a good job, but difficult. It yields great results if it goes well.”

31. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 44. Allred further notes that “some of those who finding jobs at Scofield were Olafur Sigurdsson, Gisli Geslason, Julius Jonsson, Jon Peter Jonsson and Ingveldur Carrick and Gudbjorg Davis (whose husband worked in the mines) and possibly others.”


34. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 44. The Raymond, Alberta, LDS Church Membership Records (1901–12), Church Archives, lists the names of a number of Icelanders living in the Raymond Ward during this period. The Taber Alberta LDS Church Membership Records, Church Archives, also lists twenty Icelandic names in the Taber Ward. The term ward is used to describe an LDS ecclesiastical unit made up of a couple hundred people.

35. Edward A. Geary, *A History of Emery County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, Emery County Commission, 1996), 112–14. For an Icelander’s perspective on the early history of Cleveland, see Parley Thorderson, “History and Human Geography,” unpublished paper, undated, in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. Thorderson, 2, puts the date of the coming of the Algers and the founding of Cleveland in May 1884, instead of May 1885 as Geary does. However, Geary, 164, maintains, “Family records indicate that the Algers did not arrive in Emery County until later that year.” Further, Geary, 114, points out that a Cleveland post office was chartered in January 1889 to honor President Grover Cleveland, and in
this same year Samuel Alger presided as the LDS branch president over a group of Cleveland Saints who met for church in the cabins of John and William Cowley.

36. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, begun January 3, 1886. This second portion in the same letter was written January 8, 1886; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ð), 1; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 90.

37. Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 43.


39. Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 43–44. Allred, 44, additionally notes, “Three or four [Icelanders] came directly from Iceland after 1900 and made their homes in Cleveland, bypassing Spanish Fork. Life was perhaps even harder in Cleveland than it had been in Spanish Fork, since Castle Valley was undeveloped country. . . . A number of their descendants still live in Cleveland.” The Cleveland Ward Membership Record (1890–1941), Utah Valley Regional Family History Center, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, includes the following Icelandic families during the early years of the Church in Cleveland: Einar Erickson and the six other members of his family; Svein Thordurson and five members of his family; Hálldor Johnson and six family members. Andrew Jenson, Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1941), 147, indicates, “A meeting house was erected in Cleveland in 1889–90. The saints were organized as a ward Aug. 12, 1890, with Lars Peter Oveson as Bishop.”

40. Jónsson (in Cleveland, Utah) to Borgfirðingur (in Iceland), December 20, 1890; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ð), 1; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 111.

41. Jónsson to Borgfirðingur, June 18, 1892; catalogue # Lbs IB 102, fol. B (w-ð), 2–3; see also Sigmundsson, Vesturfarar skrifa heim, 120–21.
Although Þorsteinn Jónsson never returned to walk the streets of Reykjavík or visit any part of Iceland, twenty-two native Icelanders who had previously immigrated to Utah did return as LDS missionaries during the period of 1873–1914.¹ Of this group Magnús Bjarnasson and Loftur Jónsson were the first to be called.² They had emigrated from Iceland in 1857 with a small company destined for Spanish Fork, as previously discussed.³ Bjarnasson and Jónsson launched the second and largest wave of LDS Icelandic immigration to Utah, which subsided at the turn of the twentieth century. This was also a time of mass emigration from Iceland as a whole; from 1872 to 1900, about sixteen thousand of the total population of seventy thousand emigrated, mostly to North America. After 1900 very few left.⁴
Proselytizing amid Stiff Opposition

Bjarnasson and Jónsson arrived at the Westmann Islands on July 17, 1873, and commenced preaching the gospel. They met strong opposition by the Lutheran clergy. Magnús Bjarnasson remembered, “We were called into court three times, but after being submitted to a rigid examination we were again set at liberty.”⁵ By the time the missionaries left the Westmann Islands in the spring of 1874, a branch had again been organized,⁶ and eleven Icelanders had caught the spirit of their message and gathered with them to Zion. The missionaries’ labors had been rewarded, notwithstanding the fact that they had experienced much persecution, and had been exposed to harsh weather.⁷ Einar Eiríksson, one of the Westmann Islands converts of 1874, wrote of the spiritual preparation he received prior to the arrival of the missionaries, “having been appraised [apprised] of their coming by dreams and visions.”⁸

In 1875 two more native Icelanders, Þórður Diðriksson and Samúel Bjarnasson, who had previously gathered to Utah, were called to labor in their homeland for one year. Although they did not baptize anyone during this time, they established many friendships, and several Icelanders immigrated with them to Utah when they concluded their mission.⁹ Three years after his return to Spanish Fork, Diðriksson wrote the first known Icelandic missionary tract, consisting of 186 pages. A Voice of Warning and Truth was consistently utilized in the late nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century.¹⁰

Until 1880 missionary work of the previous three decades had been largely confined to the Westmann Islands. In the spring of 1879, Elders Jón Eyvindsson and Jacob B. Jónsson were called on a mission to labor in Canada before continuing on to Iceland. However, they labored only a few months in Winnipeg and New Iceland, where they held fifteen
Magnús Bjarnasson (above) and his companion, Loftur Jónsson, were the first missionaries from Utah to be called to Iceland. They helped launch the second and largest wave of LDS Icelandic immigration to America. *Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah*
They then continued to Iceland, where they labored on the mainland, using Diðriksson’s missionary tract.¹²

Upon arrival, Jón Eyvindsson wrote concerning the opposition he and his companion immediately faced: “It is the same here as we experienced in Canada. . . . The magistrate and priests make great opposition against us. They have forbidden the people to lend us their houses to preach in. . . . There is great intolerance here. . . . It is difficult for us to get at the people, to warn them.”¹³

Notwithstanding, soon thereafter Elder Eyvindsson baptized three people in Reykjavík, the first known baptisms in the capital city.¹⁴ Eyvindsson wrote concerning this newsworthy event, “When the report spread about the baptism of these three sisters, the spirit of persecution was fiercely displayed by the people, and we were in danger from mobs. The lawyers accused us of rambling about in idleness [vagrancy], which is contrary to the law, because we travel about to preach the Gospel.” Further, “the magistrate of the town called us up twice for examination and finding us guilty of no crime, he banished us from the city and forbade us to preach. However we returned, and the chief of police put us in prison for two days. We were then taken before
the magistrate again . . . [and ordered to] pay . . . [a] fine of 100 Danish crowns each.”¹⁵

The Icelandic mission history also notes, “The baptizing of these three persons in Reykjavik set the whole town in an uproar and the brethren could scarcely walk the streets without being attacked and stoned by the mob. At last they were arrested by the police, accused of vagrancy and imprisoned for two days.”¹⁶

Voyages to America

Nevertheless, when their mission concluded, Eyvindsson, Jónsson, along with a group of twenty-two converts from Reykjavík, embarked for America on the ship Camoens.¹⁷ One of their converts, Eiríkur á Brúnum [Eiríkur Ólafsson], wrote about his experience on this voyage:

On the evening of the 8th of July, 1881 I went on board the ship Camoens, a horse transport ship of Kokkels, after I, with some effort, a scuffle, and some tribulation of soul and body, was made to protect my grandson, of 14 months old, before 10 sturdy men of Reykjavik, who intended to attack my daughter and tear the child from her bosom at the command of her child’s father, who then wished to be such, but would not acknowledge the boy when newborn.¹⁸

On July 12 they landed at the dock of Granton’s Harbor near Edinburgh, Scotland. The group then traveled by train to Liverpool before embarking on the steamer Nevada.¹⁹ Having crossed the Atlantic, presiding elder Jón Eyvindsson reported the success of the voyage in a letter to British Mission president Albert Carrington. Among other things, Eyvindsson mentioned that an Icelandic mother had given birth to twins:
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We have had a pleasant journey, and for the most part good health and spirits. On the 23rd and 24th we had strong wind blowing from the south-west, and the rough sea began to make the sisters seasick. Peace and satisfaction have existed. We have had our prayers daily. We expect to reach New York tomorrow morning.

On the 25th, one of the sisters had twins. Her husband is with the company. Both the mother and the children are doing well. One is a boy and the other a girl. The name of the boy is Halldór Tómas Atlander, and was blessed by Elder J. [Jóhn] Eyvindson, that of the girl, Victoria Nevada, and she was blessed by Elder J. [Jacob] B. Johnson. New York, July 29th. We arrived at Castle Garden at 11 o’clock yesterday, all in good health and spirits, and we expect to leave here at 6 p.m. tomorrow night.²⁰

By the time Eyvindsson returned to his home in Spanish Fork he could report to being an eye-witness to multiple births and also to the conversion of many souls. During his ministry, which lasted two years and four months, he and his companion had witnessed twenty-eight baptisms, and during this same period fifty-seven Icelanders had immigrated to Utah.²¹ Eyvindsson and Jónsson had launched the peak decade of LDS emigration, the 1880s.²² Yet missionary work in Iceland continued to be as hard as ice; conversions came only as a result of much travail. One missionary, writing in 1881 to the Scandinaviens Stjerne, noted, “Conditions in Iceland are deplorable.” This was largely the result of a famine in the land and the fact that the people were filled with “bigotry and hatred toward the Latter-day Saints.”²³ In this same year, a ray of sunlight shone on the Icelandic Saints when Spanish Fork Icelander Jón Jónsson translated the first book of Nephi into
Icelandic.²⁴ Now, for the first time, Icelanders could read in their native tongue about Lehi and his family’s successful voyage to a promised land.

In 1883 John A. Sutton reported his experience of leading a group of LDS Icelandic emigrants across the Atlantic, having met them in Liverpool just prior to embarking:

We arrived here [Queenstown] at 9:35 this (Sunday) morning, all well, no seasickness. With the assistance of the interpreter, I effected an organization of the Icelanders, and appointed Elder Thorarinn Bjarnason to take charge, and have
As noted, the year 1886 was the peak year for baptisms and emigration. Their successful journey nevertheless did not come without a price. One group who crossed the Atlantic in 1886 aboard the *Alaska* reported their challenge of passing through customs at New York:

Brother Hart met us at the landing, and after being introduced to the Saints, rendered us valuable assistance in getting our luggage inspected etc. When we reached Castle Gardens we had considerable delay and trouble in answering needless and impertinent interrogatories by the Emigration Commissioners, who were seemingly determined to find fault. This was the more apparent from the fact that the most rigid scrutiny and closest investigation in the examination of the condition and prospects of the Icelandic Saints were observed in every detail, consuming more time with the twenty-three of our people than with 375 other emigrants who had previously passed muster.

Even the *New York Times* picked up on the determent of the Icelandic Saints. In an article titled “Mormons with Little Money,” the editor noted the fact that “four families of Mormon immigrants from Iceland arrived yesterday in the Guion steamship Alaska. They numbered 25 persons all told. They were not as well clad as the average Mormons, and the whole party could not show more than $25 when they landed at Castle Garden.”

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Arrival of a Noble People

In spite of such obstacles, these Latter-day Saint Icelanders made their way to Utah, where they combined their efforts with those of other Icelandic immigrants in having a positive impact on the state. The *Millennial Star* depicted these immigrants thus: “All the Icelanders in Utah are living in Spanish Fork. They are an industrious, frugal people, and soon acquire comfortable homes, and are able to assist their less fortunate friends in emigrating from their far off native land.”³¹

An 1887 article by Icelandic convert John Torgeirson outlined some of the salient features of his native land and noble people. Among other things, Torgeirson mentioned that the history of Iceland contained more evidence of Israelite origins than the history of any other country.³² He also boasted that: “Idiocy is nearly unknown, insanity is very rare and only two murders have been committed during the last one hundred years. . . . The National Library in Reykjavik is the largest, having over 10,000 volumes.”³³ Such a noble legacy of literate people no doubt influenced Utah for good.

Throughout 1887 the Icelandic Saints continued to gather. One small group (about twenty-two to twenty-five in number) embarked from Iceland on the *Thyra* and landed in Leith, Scotland, before taking a train to Liverpool, the primary port of embarkation for the Saints. From Liverpool they joined other foreign converts and crossed the Atlantic on the *Wyoming*. This group chartered a new route of emigration, which had just been altered for the 1887 season. Instead of traveling directly from New York to Utah, this company reembarked from New York and took a twenty-four hour trip on the Old Dominion Steam line, coming to port in Norfolk, Virginia. They then continued their travel via Kansas City and Denver by rail, arriving in Utah on July 25, 1887.³⁴
A Poor Harvest on Difficult Terrain

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, missionary work in Iceland continued to be difficult. Conversions were sparse, and few Mormon Icelanders immigrated to Utah. During this period the elders continued seeking converts primarily on the southern coast of Iceland’s mainland, establishing their headquarters at Reykjavík, with occasional seasonal trips to the Westmann Islands.

However, others traveled to different regions of the country in search of more fertile fields. In the fall of 1894, Elder Þórarinn Bjarnason³⁶ wrote of challenges he faced traveling across Iceland’s wilderness to the eastern territory of Iceland.

I am traveling on foot, except when I have a guide to take me across the rivers and through unknown places. Once in crossing a large river on a ferry boat, we became fast in an icfloe which threatened to drive us into the sea. The breakers were very dangerous, and would certainly have upset the boat if we had been taken a little further out. We barely es-

³⁵ Þórarinn Bjarnason was called to serve a mission to Iceland in 1894 and expressed the difficulties of traveling on foot across the land of fire and ice. Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah
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caped by throwing a rope to those people who were standing on shore who caught it and kept us from going farther.³⁷

Nearly a decade later, another LDS missionary wrote of such obstacles:

It is hardly safe to go a day’s journey without constantly having a guide. All traveling is done either on ponies or on foot, as there are no railroads, and only one short stage line in the whole country. To travel with the stage or “post wagon,” as they call it here would weary the patience of Job. I rode in it a short distance, but when I found that I could make time by walking I left it.³⁸

A few months later, this same missionary described not only the difficulty of travel but the season of the journey which augmented the problem:

During the winter season it is practically impossible to travel around in the country and, during the summer months the people are so busy that they could not, even if they felt so disposed, spare time enough to listen to an Elder explain the Gospel. Early in spring and late in autumn are the only seasons that farmers can be approached, for then they have a little leisure to spare. This being the case, the Elders have spent the winters in the towns and cities along the coast. These are the principal business places as well as seaports and rendezvous for sailors and fishermen.³⁹

In 1899 Elder Halldór Jónsson,⁴⁰ struggling with poor health, reported his frustration of proselytizing during the summer months when the Icelanders were too busy working to stop and listen. “Nearly all the people are engaged for two months, from daylight to dark in haymaking.”⁴¹

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This statement about the preoccupation of the Icelanders is indicative of the seasonal spiritual famine that occurred at the turn of the twentieth century, when few converts were made, and emigration subsequently ebbed. On April 29, 1901, Elder Lorenzo Anderson and Elder Jón Jóhannesson had literally washed their feet as a symbolic witness against all the inhabitants of Reykjavík.⁴²

Determined Missionaries despite Hardships

During the fall of 1901, Elder Jón Jóhannesson traveled to the northwest and began proselytizing in the city of Akureyri. Finding there a more receptive people, he left a blessing rather than a curse on the inhabitants, although he initially met stiff opposition:

In October I took a steamboat to this town, which has about 1,400 inhabitants, and when I arrived here I was told it would be no use for me to stop here, as I would be killed. But I was not afraid, for I knew I was directed by the Lord and would be preserved by His power. . . . A Methodist preacher here commenced to warn the people against me and my tracts, but as a general rule the effect of that was to awaken the people to investigate. . . . I was led to invoke the blessing of the Almighty upon the country and its inhabitants, and since that time everything seems to have changed for the better. The whole community seems to be friendly towards me, and many have told me that they have been greatly deceived about our religion. The people as a rule are courteous, kind, intelligent and reasonable. They have lost confidence in their own ministers. They are seeking the streams of “living water.”⁴³
Notwithstanding this friendly reception, apparently few actually drank from the water, and there is no evidence any of the inhabitants of Akureyri actually entered the waters of baptism. Certainly one reason for the Icelandic resistance to the gospel was expressed by Loftur Bjarnason, who explained:

Many lack courage to accept it because of the ridicule of their friends; others are so poor that they are forced to comply sometimes against their inner convictions, with the ordinances of the prevailing church in order that their children be not taken from them. It has often happened that baptized members of our faith, in order to retain their children, have been forced to allow the ministers to sprinkle and confirm them, otherwise the authorities would take these children from their parents and place them elsewhere.⁴⁴

In 1903 Bjarnason reported his proselytizing labors among his relatives in the eastern part of Iceland, which was an area rarely visited by LDS missionaries.⁴⁵ He noted that his uncle, a Lutheran minister, had kindly received him. He added, “Once I had the pleasure of speaking publicly in a Lutheran church to a medium-sized congregation. The minister, a relative of mine, was liberal minded enough to allow me the privilege, the first of the kind that has been granted our Elders in this land.”⁴⁶

During the first decade of the twentieth century few Icelanders converted to Mormonism; those who did immigrated to Canada. On June 16, 1903, Elder Jón Jóhannesson led a small company of LDS Icelandic immigrants to gather in Raymond, Alberta.⁴⁷ Gleaning these converts was well deserved as he had met stiff opposition and was even threatened with death during the time he labored alone for nearly three years as a missionary.⁴⁸ An example of the opposition he encountered occurred in the city of Reykjavík soon after his
arrived. During a public meeting, a group of ruffians accosted him. He explains:

When I began to speaking they began to squeak and hollo, and then crying like a chicken, then to throw beans all over the people in the room like a hail-storm. When they found they could not hurt me with this, they began to shoot beans again until one of them hit me in the eye which hurt me very much, so I had to give up the meeting, though I spoke some time, and told them with great power and the spirit of prophecy what would follow their iniquities, and how they would bring down the judgments of God upon themselves. I further told them that I was not afraid of them, for even if they should kill me I was ready to seal my testimony with my blood, if they so desired, as others had done before. Then the lights went out, and as I went toward the door someone hit me on the head and broke my hat all to pieces, though I have worn it every day since, for the women-folk sewed it together for me.⁴⁹

Einar Eiríksson was the last missionary to serve in Iceland before the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Courtesy of the Icelandic Association of Utah
In spite of such tough opposition, the early-twentieth-century missionaries sent to labor in their native country of Iceland worked diligently, believing there were still souls to harvest in Iceland. Before his release, Elder Loftur Bjarnason, who labored faithfully and alone as a missionary from 1903 to 1906, reported thirty-eight members of the Church in Iceland.⁵⁰ In 1905 he described missionary labors in Iceland for the month of July: “We have visited the homes of sixty-five strangers; revisited fifteen of them; distributed six books and four hundred and sixty-four tracts; held four meetings and forty Gospel conversations.” Such strenuous efforts yielded but one convert—a woman who had been investigating the Church for over a year.⁵¹ During this same year he noted, “Reykjavík is a city of about eight or nine thousand inhabitants, and it would be of great value for the work if the Church owned a house here.”⁵² Regrettably, nearly a century passed before an LDS chapel came to Iceland.

In 1914, at the conclusion of Elder Einar Eiríksson’s second term as a missionary in Iceland, the Icelandic Mission was closed.⁵³ World War I loomed, and with it, emigration from Iceland in general ceased. It would be another six decades before the mission would reopen and an Icelandic branch would be reestablished.

Notes

1. “The Historical Record of the Icelandic Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1873–1914,” Church Archives, 2, contains a “Register of Elders” that lists the twenty-three missionaries by name. There are also individual columns for the date they arrived on their mission in Iceland, remarks concerning release and leadership appointment dates, and where they were residing at
the time of their call. This document is not to be confused with the Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, which covers the years 1851–1914 and does not contain this register. It appears that it was most probably a compilation of assistant Church historian Andrew Jenson, who simply included the earlier years in this compilation along with this register. Fifteen of these missionaries resided in Spanish Fork, Utah; six in Cleveland, Utah; one (Jón Jóhannesson) in Raymond, Alberta, Canada; and one in Brigham City, Utah (Lorenzo Andersen), at the time of their call. Jóhannesson had lived previously in Spanish Fork but had migrated to Raymond in 1896. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 12, lists Andersen as the lone Dane from the Danish Mission as all others were native Icelanders.

2. According to La Nora Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah* (reprint, Spanish Fork, UT: Icelandic Association of Utah, 1998), 68, Magnús was born August 3, 1815, in Iceland, the son of Bjarni Jónsson. Further, “in 1853 he became a member of the LDS Church. He was married to Þuríður Magnúsdóttir, and in 1859 he and Þuríður emigrated to Spanish Fork, Utah. . . . He was a scholarly man who loved to read, and he is credited with founding the Icelandic library in Spanish Fork. He died in 1905 at the age 90 years, and is buried in the Spanish Fork Cemetery.”


4. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 17. Jonas Thor, *Icelanders in North America: The First Settlers* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 17, drawing upon data from Júníus Kristinsson, *Vesturfraskrá, 1870–1914* (Reykjavík: Institute of History, University of Iceland, 1983), Table 7, writes: “Statistics show that in the beginning of the [Icelandic] emigration period, most of these Icelandic emigrants were young couples with children. During the first decade, from 1870–1880, 2857 individuals left Iceland for North America. Of these, 1894 were children, teenagers, and adults under the age of thirty. Four hundred and forty were between the ages of thirty and
forty. This ratio did not change much throughout the entire emigration period of 1870 to 1914.”

5. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 1873. Tom Checketts, “Here We Go Again: A Look at the History of Religious Rights in Iceland,” Fall 1999, unpublished paper in the author’s possession, 36, notes, “The conflict between the Mormons and the establishment came to a head when the Bishop of Iceland refused to recognize a 1873 marriage performed by a Mormon Elder and characterized the cohabitation of the couple as ‘illegal and immoral.’” Michael Fell, And Some Fell into Good Soil: A History of Christianity in Iceland (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 230, adds, “Efforts to punish the couple, however, came to an end a year later, when Iceland’s new constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion came into effect.”

Several articles on the subject of Mormons and civil marriage are attested in the Icelandic newspaper Ísafold. See, for example, these topics treated for the following dates: December 17, 1875; January 8, 1876; May 10, 1876.

6. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, May 27, 1874, notes, “A branch of the Church was organized on Westmann Island with eight members. Einar Erikson (one of the converts) was ordained an elder by Loptur Johnson and appointed to preside over the branch.” In Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 7, Einar Eiríksson wrote, “After the departure of the Elders the branch was in a weak condition, as they had none of the church works excepting the bible. However, we held meetings every Sunday in my little dwelling house, the saints were united and the power of God was made manifest by healings and we had dreams and visions to strengthen our faith.” (Eiríksson wrote “Short History of the Iceland Mission” in 1912. This work is compiled at the end of the Icelandic missionary history.)

7. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, May 29, 1874, lists the names of those emigrants and notes that only one of the
eleven left as a member of the LDS Church. However, the other ten were baptized after arriving in Utah. The group sailed from Iceland to Great Britain on the ship *Hermine* and on the *Nevada* from Liverpool to New York.


9. One of the emigrants had previously been baptized into the LDS Church, while the other three or four other emigrants had not yet been baptized (see Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 1875, August 8, 1875).

10. Referring to Diðriksson’s tract, Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, Eiríks son notes, “I consider this book the best that has been published in the Iceland language on our religion.” A copy of this work is housed in the Church Archives in Salt Lake City. Byron Geslison, who was called to reopen the Icelandic Mission in 1975, indicated that the missionaries still used Þórður’s tract a century after it was written (oral interviews with Byron Geslison and his family in the winter of 2000).

11. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 7–8. Concerning the brief mission of Elders Jónson and Eyvindsson to Canada, “The Gospel to the Icelanders,” *Millennial Star*, September 15, 1879, 587, notes, “They have, in accordance with a portion of their appointment, labored about three and a half months in Manitoba, in the Northern portion of British America, where about 2,000 Icelanders are located. During their ministry in that part they held seventeen meetings, three of which were in the open-air, the others in private houses. They encountered malignant opposition, incited, for the most part, by John Bjarnason, a Lutheran priest . . . The priest circulated many false reports concerning the elders and counseled the people not to listen to and to shut their house against them. The meetings were, however, attended by from sixty to one hundred persons, and they left some believing in the Gospel and intending to gather to Utah this autumn.”
12. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 1879. “The Gospel to the Icelanders,” *Millennial Star*, September 15, 1879, 587, notes that these missionaries had a copy of the manuscript and were planning on printing no less than two thousand copies of the tract. In an article written a quarter century later by President Loftur Bjarnason titled “The Work of the Lord in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 145–47, he states, “The precious truths of this book contains (referring to Thordur Didricksson’s missionary tract) have been the cause of many accepting the Gospel and emigrating to Utah, where they are to-day staunch and faithful Latter-day Saints.” See Appendix B for this manuscript in its entirety.

13. Letter of Jón Eyvindsson to President Wm. Budge, written from Reykjavík, March 18, 1880, “Missionaries in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, April 5, 1880, 221. Jón Porgeirson, “Iceland Items,” *Deseret News*, December 29, 1880, 767, notes that Eyvindsson and Jónsson “had suffered imprisonment and all kinds of persecution. . . . The cause of this great persecution is that the Lutheran faith is universal in Iceland, and the Lutheran clergy have unlimited power there as there is no other sect in the whole country.”

14. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, March 22, 1880, notes, “The names of these converts were Setselja Sigvaldsdottir (born in 1858), Sigridur Bjarnsdottir (born in 1834 in Reykjavik) and Sigridur Jonsdottir (born in 1846).”

15. Letter of Jón Eyvindsson to President William Budge, *Millennial Star*, May 31, 1880, 350. See also Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, March 22, 1880. The story of the missionaries being arrested for vagrancy was also mentioned in a local Reykjavik newspaper *Isafold*, April 9, 1880, 36.

16. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, March 22, 1880. As noted, at this time Þorsteinn Jónsson and Jón Jónsson Borgfirðingur were both police officers in Reykjavik. They were also both witnesses at the trial of these two Mormon missionar-
ies, and Sigríður Jónsdóttir (as mentioned in note 14) was one of the three women Eyvindsson baptized. She was also the wife of Þorsteinn. Þorsteinn joined the Church and gathered with his wife to Utah the following year. In the 1882 Reykjavík Parish Census, Þorsteinn’s age is forty-six and his status is “police officer.” The age of Sigríður is given as thirty-nine. Appreciation is extended to Jóhanna Helgadóttir, an employee at the Reykjavík City Archives, for bringing this information to the attention of the author. After Þorsteinn immigrated to Spanish Fork and then moved to Cleveland, Utah, he communicated with his friend Borgfirðingur for many years. However, Borgfirðingur remained at home in Iceland as a Lutheran and never immigrated to Utah.


18. Vilhjálmur Gísason, Eiríkur á Brúnnum (Reykjavík: Ísafoldarprentsmiðja H.F., 1946), 116, trans. Darron S. Allred. Eiríkur á Brúnnum is actually Eiríkur Ólafsson. According to Allred, The Icelanders of Utah, 110, he was born by Eyjafjöll, in Iceland, November 14, 1824. Further, “he was married to Runveldur Runolfsdottir. He was a rancher and also operated a restaurant in Reykjavik. He was a writer and published a book which is still read in Iceland today. In 1881 he was baptized into the LDS Church, and shortly after he and his wife, their daughter, Ingveldur, and her son Thorbjorn Thorvaldson, emigrated to Spanish Fork, Utah. They traveled by train from New York, but at North Platte, Nebraska, Runveldur died of heat exhaustion. . . . In 1883 Eirikur returned to Iceland on a mission for the LDS Church. After his return, he moved to Independence, Missouri, about 1890. In 1891 he went back to Iceland where he married himself to Gudfina Saemundsdottir. He died in Iceland.”

1951 Census (Edinburgh: John Bartholomew & Son, n.d.), 301, for details regarding the location of Granton Harbor. The voyage from Iceland to Scotland and then down to Liverpool by train or by ship was the general pattern for the Icelandic LDS emigrants during the latter half of the nineteenth century. From Liverpool they then crossed the Atlantic to America. The United States port of entry most used by the Icelandic Saints was Castle Garden, which was located on the shore of New York City. It had an immigration depot from 1855 to 1889, which was replaced by Ellis Island in 1892. Only the first three LDS Icelandic immigrants to Utah came by way of the port of New Orleans. Commencing in 1855, Brigham Young sent all others to either Boston, Philadelphia, or New York, thinking it was too risky to bring the Mormon immigrants up the Mississippi River (via New Orleans) due to the threat of yellow fever and cholera (see Brigham Young to Franklin D. Richards, August 2, 1854, “Foreign Correspondence,” Millennial Star, October 1854, 684, cited in Fred E. Woods, Gathering to Nauvoo [American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2002], 89).

20. Jón Eyvindsson to Pres. A. Carrington, Millennial Star, August 29, 1881, 554–55. Such reports written by Church leaders on LDS company-chartered voyages were a general routine. Voyage accounts would be sent back to Liverpool, the mission headquarters for the LDS Church in Europe. Hundreds of these accounts are readily available in issues of the Millennial Star for the latter half of the nineteenth century. These and other first-person LDS immigrant accounts are also available on a CD titled “Mormon Immigration Index,” which covers the years 1840–90 and is available for purchase through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints distribution centers. The editor and compiler of this index is also the author of this work.


22. As noted, research compiled by Bliss Anderson (a member of the Icelandic Association of Utah), reveals that 268 of 410 Icelanders
who emigrated from Iceland to Utah during the period 1854–1914 did so during the decade of the 1880s. See Appendix A for a list of the names of these emigrants, which includes genealogical data, including birth date, place, and year of emigration.


24. This is the first known translation of a portion of the Book of Mormon. The original is in the possession of Marian P. Robbins, the great-granddaughter of Jón Jónsson.

25. Letter of John A. Sutton, *Millennial Star*, July 23, 1883, 479. Sutton may have been motivated to learn Icelandic due to his loneliness on the voyage. In a letter written two weeks later he commented that he would have rather taken a thousand Englishmen across the ocean because he found it difficult to converse with the Icelanders and did not have any Saint to converse with in his language (see *Millennial Star*, August 13, 1883, 527).


27. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, Einar Eiriksson, “Short History of the Iceland Mission,” 9, indicated that in the spring of 1886 he traveled from the Westmann Islands to Reykjavík “to act as private agent for 15 emigrants who were going to Utah. I was instrumental in reducing their fares to Scotland from 70 crowns to 35, by correspondence from the Steamship Company.” Emigrants then generally took a train down to Liverpool where they joined with other European Saints who then crossed the Atlantic to America. In Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, 10, Eiriksson later summarizes his mission: “Having labored 14 months and 6 days . . . I baptized 25, and converted and assisted 57 emigrants to Zion, the
majority of which were members of the Church, and most of the others were baptized after arriving in Spanish Fork.”

28. This was James H. Hart, who served admirably as the immigration agent at New York from 1882 to 1887. He was a very successful politician and attorney and even continued to serve in the Bear Lake Stake presidency in spite of his seasonal immigration assignments in the East. See Edward L. Hart, *Mormon in Motion: The Life and Journals of James H. Hart 1825–1906 in England, France and America* (Salt Lake City: Windsor Books, 1978), for details of his life and experience as an immigration agent.


32. In a conversation with Byron Geslison (February 2000), Byron, who served as a patriarch in Iceland in the late twentieth century, indicated that every blessing he gave in Iceland reflected that the recipient was from the tribe of Ephraim. The only exception was a foreigner who was temporarily stationed at the NATO base in Keflavík.


34. Between five thousand and six thousand Saints came through Norfolk on this new route between 1887 and 1890. For more information concerning the cause of the rerouting and the experience of these Saints through the port of Norfolk, see Fred E. Woods, “Norfolk and Mormon Folk: Latter-day Saint Immigration through Old Dominion, 1887–1890,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 1, no. 1 (spring 2000): 73–91.

35. Loftur Bjarnason, “The Work of the Lord in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 146, further notes, “There are many parts of this country that have not been yet covered, as the Elders, who come here have labored principally in those localities in which they were
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born and reared. It is only along the southern coast of the mainland and in the Westmann Islands that the Gospel has to any extent been preached, while the greater portions of the northern and eastern countries have never been visited.” See also *Millennial Star*, March 24, 1904, 188, and May 12, 1904, 301–2, for evidence of seasonal proselytizing in the Westmann Islands.

36. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 69, indicates that Þórarinn was born June 17, 1849, and was from Skafafell’s County, Iceland. In 1882 he and his wife, Byrnhildur Jónsdottir Bjarnasson, were converted to Mormonism and immigrated to Utah the following year with three of their children. Þórarinn died February 21, 1924. He is buried in the Spanish Fork Cemetery.

37. *Millennial Star*, December 17, 1894, 806. Elder Bjarnason, writing a decade later, also spoke of the difficulties missionaries encountered proselytizing in the country. Here he noted, “Houses are scattered, being from a half mile to a mile and a half apart, and the only method of traveling is either by foot or on ponies. Often it is impossible to go from one farmhouse to another without being accompanied by a guide, on account of the dangerous streams that are to be encountered, which only experienced men can find the way to cross. To purchase a horse and pay a guide wages, together with other expenses, has made traveling in this country both expensive and difficult” (*Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 146).


40. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 97, notes that Halldór Hansson was born in Skurðber, Meðaland, Iceland, on March 1, 1856. In 1880 Halldór and his wife, Guðrún Jónsdóttir Einarsson, joined the LDS Church, and the following year they immigrated to Spanish Fork, Utah, with their son Johann. Halldór and his family lived in Spanish
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Fork as well as Cleveland, Utah; he died January 11, 1936, and is buried in the Cleveland Cemetery.


42. “Record of Members of the Icelandic Mission, 1873–1914,” Church Archives, 40. Anderson, a Dane coming from the Danish Mission, was the only non-Icelandic missionary to serve in Iceland during this period.


44. President Loftur Bjarnason, “The Work of the Lord in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 147. Several months later, Bjarnason, “Notes from the Mission Field,” *Millennial Star*, September 1, 1904, 555, explained another factor which made proselytizing difficult: “There are many wicked stories afloat in this country about the ‘Mormons,’ and much time is spent in explaining to the people the absurdity and falsity of these tales.” One of the doctrines that received the most opposition in Iceland and in other parts of the world was polygamy, which was a practice that was rescinded through an official manifesto issued by the Church in 1890.

45. Most of the missionaries concentrated on proselytizing on the Westmann Islands, the Reykjavík region and the western coast of Iceland due to the difficulty of traveling across the country, especially in winter. Therefore they consigned themselves principally to the western seaports where sailors, fishermen and people generally would gather during the winters (see Letter of Loftur Bjarnason, “The Work of the Lord in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 146. In this same year, Bjarnason wrote, “During our stay in Vestmanneyjar we had so won the hearts of the people that many expressed their regrets at seeing us depart. Although we did not
make any converts there, we did make a host of friends, and several are earnestly investigating the Gospel” (*Millennial Star*, December 22, 1904, 812). The Westmann Islands was not only the place where the missionaries generally received their most welcome reception, but during the later half of the nineteenth century, it was where they plucked most of their converts, commencing with the arrival of the first LDS missionaries to Iceland in 1851. In another letter, Bjarnason reported in “Travelers in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, May 12, 1904, 302, “Vestmanneyjar is a beautiful group of islands about twelve miles off the mainland in a southerly direction. The largest island of the group has a population of eight hundred souls, while the smaller islands are used principally for the pasturing of the sheep. . . . About two-thirds of those who have embraced the Gospel from this country have come from this place, and indeed we feel the same spirit of goodwill toward our people that has ever existed here. We have been better received than we could have anticipated, and we are beginning to think that the hospitality of the people is limitless.”


47. “Record of Members of the Icelandic Mission, 1874–1914,” Church Archives, 78 ff. Page 88 indicates that the Saints who emigrated with Elder Jón Jóhannesson “took passage on the S. S. Laura for Raymond Alberta Canada via [the] Albion Line.” According to the *Millennial Star*, July 2, 1903, 426, Elder Jóhannesson and four Saints were to emigrate via Glasgow. The “Historical Record of the Icelandic Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1873–1914,” Church Archives, 14–15, 17, notes that three of the group were Guðfinna Sæmundsdóttir, Jón Grímsson, and Guðnúrur Jónsson. Elder Halldór Jónsson reported that due to the unfavorable temporal prospects in Iceland during this period, “many are emigrating to Canada, and many more would do so if their finances would allow” (see *Millennial Star*, July 5, 1900, 426). Further, the Raymond,
Alberta, Membership Record (1901–12), Church Archives, lists the names of at least ten additional Icelanders living in Raymond during this period. It also records that some of these Icelanders migrated later to the Taber Ward, located a few miles away in the predominate Mormon area of southern Alberta, Canada. The Taber, Alberta, Membership Record, Church Archives, also lists the names of twenty Icelandic names in this ward.

48. “Returning from Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, July 2, 1903, 426. Manuscript History of the Icelandic Mission, Einar Eiríksson, “Short History of Iceland Mission,” 11, notes that Jóhannesson arrived in Reykjavík on September 28, 1900. “When he arrived there he gave the statistical report of the saints in Iceland as follows: One Elder, one Deacon, 16 lay members, and 12 children not baptized belonging to the Latter-day Saints. During the missionary labors, he baptized ten, ordained three, and blessed thirteen also aided five to emigrate to America. So at the close of his mission there were: Three Elders, One deacon, 18 members and 17 children, making a total of 39 souls. While in Iceland Elder Johannesen composed and published a number of tracts which assisted in the promulgating the everlasting gospel. He received an honorable release in June, 1903, arrived in Raymond, Canada, July 20th and at Salt Lake City, December 5th.”

49. “Abstract of Correspondence,” *Millennial Star*, December 20, 1900, 811. In an article titled “Returning from Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, July 2, 1903, 426, Elder Jóhannesson’s tenacity in spite of such hardships was noted. In addition to the persecution, it was noted that “Elder Johannesson has found himself without money at times, and has had to rely on the aid of the Lord. On one occasion he had to sell his walking stick and English Book of Mormon to supply his necessities. He has during his mission written a book and published over two thousand copies, besides publishing nearly eight thousand large tracts. . . . We wonder if there is any church in the world whose members would go under such trials and do such work, at the same
time bearing their own expenses.” Further, in an article written by Loftur Bjarnason titled “The Work of the Lord in Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, March 10, 1904, 147, Bjarnson notes that the book Jóhannesson wrote was titled *A Call to the Kingdom of God*, which contained 224 pages. The author has a copy of this book in his possession.

50. Loftur Bjarnason, “From Iceland,” *Millennial Star*, February 22, 1906, 121. Seven months later the *Millennial Star*, September 20, 1906, 607, reported Loftur Bjarnason was in charge of fifty-three emigrating Saints from Iceland. An article titled “Items for Iceland,” in the *Millennial Star*, July 5, 1906, 427, mentioned that inasmuch as there were “ten Sisters in Reykjavik, he [Bjarnason] has organized a relief society in that branch. The Saints are paying their tithing and attending to their duties generally.” The Relief Society is an ecclesiastical organization for women in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was established in 1842 and has as its motto “Charity Never Faileth.” The Historical Record of the Icelandic Mission, 1873–1914, 62–63, reports twenty-seven LDS members and thirteen children under the age of eight. On these pages is a statistical membership list for the years 1900 to 1911. By 1911, only twenty-six LDS members and three children under the age of eight were recorded. *The Autobiography and Journals of Andrew Jenson*, August 14–21, 1911, Church Archives, reveals that Jenson, assistant Church historian, visited Reykjavik where he rented a hall in order to lecture on Mormonism. He and the local missionaries were disappointed with the outcome inasmuch as the hall held up to four hundred people, but only thirty-five attended. Furthermore, some left before the lecture was over. On August 19, 1911, Jenson writes, “It is, however, possible that some of them could not understand Danish.” Yet on the following day Jenson notes that he gave a second lecture in a different location where 75 people attended. Finally, he adds, “The records show that there are 26 members of the Church in Iceland.” According to an article titled “Will Write History of Iceland Mission,” *Deseret...
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News, March 2, 1926, cited in the Journal History of this same date, fifteen years later Jenson is mentioned as the person who would compile the Manuscript History of the Iceland Mission, the last of a series of worldwide mission histories to be written.

51. “Report from Iceland,” Millennial Star, August 31, 1905, 554–55. “Traveling in Iceland,” Millennial Star, May 12, 1904, 301, Bjarnason describes even more taxing efforts to win souls: “During the months of March and April we have visited the homes of 250 strangers, distributed 676 tracts, held five private meetings with Saints and investigators, and baptized one person.”

52. Elder Bjarnason, “Notes from Iceland,” Millennial Star, October 12, 1905, 653. Writing from Reykjavík, Halldór Jónsson noted five years earlier, “If we had a meeting house here we could get many listeners, and, I believe, many would join the Church” (“Abstract of Correspondence,” Millennial Star, April 12, 1900, 234).

53. “Historical Record of Icelandic Mission, 1873–1914,” 41, states, “July 8, 1914 Elder Einar Eriksen, who commenced his labors on the Island July 11, 1913, was released today, on account of a discontinuance of missionary work in Iceland, and in compliance with instructions received from the First Presidency.”
Although there was no organized LDS Icelandic branch between 1914 and 1974, in 1930 two full-time missionaries were sent to Iceland from the Danish Mission to serve for a few months: James C. Ostegar and F. Lynn Michelsen.¹ A visit to Copenhagen by a returning missionary in 1938 revealed that after these missionaries had spent a summer in Iceland, they were called back “thinking it was not of any use.”²

Soon after visiting the Danish Mission in 1955, Elder Spencer W. Kimball, a member of the Church’s Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, wrote a letter to Church President David O. McKay and his counselors: “I wonder if further consideration should be given to the inclusion of this area [Iceland] in the Danish Mission because of the language, to be made an independent mission later if and when it is secure enough.”³ Three years later, an opportunity arose which led to the reemergence of missionary activity when a twenty-eight-year-old Latter-day Saint named David B. Timmins arrived with his family to
work as the American Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Iceland. Consul Timmins later wrote, “When my wife and I arrived in Reykjavik, Iceland, with our two small sons in early 1958 for my posting to the U.S. Embassy there we immediately found ourselves to be objects of great interest because of the fact that we were Utahns and Mormons. We quickly learned that virtually everyone in Iceland has relatives in Utah—most in the Spanish Fork area.”

Ambassador David B. Timmins (center) while serving as the first branch president in Spain, 1968. Courtesy of LDS Church Archives
CHAPTER 6: GOSPEL MESSENGERS RETURN TO ICELAND

Groundwork Laid by Consul Timmins

Timmins further related, “We soon found ourselves invited to any number of receptions, where we were besieged with questions about Utah and the Church. And the local newspaper soon arrived to interview and photograph us and our three children [the third child was born after their arrival] for a front-page article.”⁵ Soon thereafter, Timmins was told that the Lutheran bishop of Iceland was teaching a comparative religion course at the University of Iceland and wanted him to discuss Mormon doctrine with his students. Timmins reported,

The Bishop, who proved to be a most distinguished and courteous gentleman, came to our home for a period of one night a week for six or eight weeks while we explored Mormon doctrine in detail, and in the process we became good friends. At the end of our relationship, two years later when we were about to depart Iceland, he told me that he would be pleased to welcome Mormon missionaries back to Iceland (where they had not been for over a hundred years) because he felt we had a message which would improve the moral climate of his countrymen which he considered to be deteriorating.⁶

Not only was Timmins welcomed by this gentle bishop, but he and his wife were invited to spend an evening in the country home of Iceland’s famous Nobel Laureate for Literature, Halldór Kiljan Laxness. Here in the Laxness home, the Timmins also had the opportunity to mingle with other guests who were numbered among Iceland’s aristocracy. During the course of the evening, Laxness invited Timmins privately into his library and related to him what Iceland’s bishop had told Laxness about the Mormon from the embassy. Timmins explains what followed:
It turned out that he was considering a Mormon theme for his next novel and had been put on to me by our mutual acquaintance the Bishop. We talked history and doctrine for about three hours, and at the end of the evening he asked my assistance in arranging contacts and interviews for his intended visit to Utah to gather background for his novel. I thereupon wrote my father, W. Mont Timmins, a bishop, patriarch, and historian, who agreed to make further appointments and escort Mr. Laxness during his visit to Utah. I also wrote a couple of General Authority acquaintances. . . . Mr. Laxness made his trip, later informing me how courteously he’d been received and how delighted he was with his trip. While I’d by that time left Iceland for Harvard University, Mr. Laxness sent me an English language copy of his new book which he called *Paradise Regained* [Reclaimed].

Timmins’s assignment as a U.S. diplomat in Iceland ended in 1960; still, the catalytic events he experienced over a period of two brief years proved consequential. After returning to Utah, Timmins explained, “Elder Kimball called my wife and me to his office to inquire about our experiences in Iceland. Within a year, we learned the Danish Mission had commissioned a group of missionaries to take up the Icelandic Bishop’s invitation and a District of the Danish Mission was established in Iceland.” The following year President David O. McKay sent Alvin R. Dyer (Assistant to the Twelve) to Iceland to look into the possibility of sending missionaries to Iceland again.

During the October 1962 general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Elder Alvin R. Dyer, spoke of his recent meeting with the mayor of Reykjavik:

> Under the instruction of President McKay, during my term in Europe, I had the experience of going to Iceland and there,
CHAPTER 6: GOSPEL MESSENGERS RETURN TO ICELAND

after meeting all of the civic authorities that we thought it important to meet, I went into the office of the mayor of Reykjavik, Mayor Hallgrimsson, and he treated us with such courtesy and with such friendliness that I wondered why a man that far off would be so friendly to us in our desire to find out if it would be possible that missionaries could be sent into that land... Mayor Hallgrimsson came to America, unannounced, not as a mayor but as an individ-ual, primarily to visit an uncle who was among those con-verted. He met and lived with the Mormon people in that area. He observed their manner and way of life and he told of finally coming to Salt Lake City where he met a man who managed a motel, and he said that this man went out of his way to help him. . . . “If these are Latter-day Saints, who so befriended me, why would I not be friendly to you?” And I have often wondered if that man who owned this motel re-ally knew the good that he did when he befriended Mayor Hallgrimsson of Reykjavik, Iceland.¹⁰

Fact-Finding Mission to Iceland

Just two years later, LDS missionaries Elder P. Bryce Christensen of the Danish Mission and Elder Richard C. Torgerson of the Norwegian Mission teamed up for a visit to Iceland. Their first stop was Keflavik, where there was a NATO Naval Air station, as well as a small cluster of American Latter-day Saints serving in the military.¹¹ They were given the assignment to assess the feasibility of sending missionaries to Iceland again.¹² A few days later, Christensen reported his findings to his mission president, R. Earl Sorensen, who was stationed at mission headquarters in Copenhagen:¹³
I feel that four missionaries could have more than enough work to do if they were assigned to Reykjavik. There is an active servicemen’s organization at the Keflavik U.S. Naval Station. We stayed with the leader for the group, and he was very enthused about the possibility of sending missionaries to Iceland. . . . He said he would give the missionaries all the support possible. We met with the servicemen’s group on Sunday, and they were thrilled to have missionaries in attendance.¹⁴

Christensen suggested, “I think that two experienced missionaries from either Denmark or Norway (both languages are equally effective) should be sent to Iceland first to get things organized. Then I would suggest that two missionaries direct from home be sent up as their companions and learn Icelandic.”¹⁵ Christensen also informed President Sorensen of his meeting with Bishop Sigurbjörn Einarsson, the head of the state Church of Iceland:

We explained the missionary program and Church organization to him, and bore our testimonies. We presented him with a copy of Jesu Kristi Kirke Af Sidsta Dagens Helliges Historia and the Book of Mormon. . . . The Bishop said that it would not be very hard for us to find a place to meet. He said that, of course, he would have to attack any of our teachings which he thought were false. We asked him to read the Book of Mormon before he started attacking. He listened very attentively to us and was very polite.¹⁶

The young Mormon missionaries also had the privilege of meeting with Mr. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, director of the National Library of Iceland. “He was very friendly and willing to give us any help we needed,”¹⁷ Christensen commented. However, the missionaries’ high expectations of association
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with the mayor of Reykjavik, with whom Elder Dyer had previously visited, met with disappointment. According to Christensen:

Our visit to the Mayor of Reykjavik, Geir Hallgrimeson, was very disappointing after the great build-up we had received. He was very polite, but he said that he could just barely remember President Dyer’s visit. He said that he had not been in Utah since the visit (as it said in the letter from President Peterson) and that he was not in favor of any of our Church programs because he knew nothing about the Church. Evidently there has been a great deal of misunderstanding on the part of someone.¹⁸

Christensen summarized the remaining portion of this brief and memorable fact-finding excursion of 1964: “We tracted for a couple of hours, and found exactly the same attitude toward religion as there is found in Denmark and Norway. The people are generally very interested and it won’t be any trouble for missionaries to make appointments and get opportunities to preach the gospel. The big job will get them to see a need for religion.”¹⁹

Yet another decade elapsed before formal plans were in place for the reestablishment of missionary work among the natives of Iceland.

Preparation of Byron Geslison to Reopen the Icelandic Mission

Still it appears that a plan for the reemergence of the Church in Iceland had already been in the making in the very year the LDS Icelandic Mission closed. On May 15, 1914, a full-blooded Icelander, Byron T. Geslison, was born in Spanish Fork, Utah. His great-great-grandmother had left Iceland in 1857, bound for Spanish Fork, where she lived among the Latter-day
Saints the remainder of her days. Byron’s great-grandmother (Guðný Erasmusdóttir Haflíðasson) left a legacy that infected her posterity with a commitment to the LDS faith as well as a love for their native homeland.²⁰ Further, when Byron’s Icelandic grandmother (Steinunn Þorsteinsdóttir Geslison) became a widow, she did not want to be alone. Byron recalled:

As soon as I was old enough, she wanted me to stay with her evenings and at night and this I did until 10 years old, when she passed away. . . . She spoke mostly Icelandic to me and taught me in the ways of thelander. She had a map of Iceland on the wall along with old time pictures of the Westmann Island. I can still see them. . . . She told me of other tales of Iceland and the happenings she remembered. I developed a strong desire to go to this rugged land of my forefathers.²¹

Little did he know as a child that one day he would be the individual asked to reopen LDS missionary work among his countrymen after a six-decade closure of the Icelandic Mission. A specific experience further endeared him to his native homeland. Just before returning from serving as an LDS

Byron T. Geslison was called to reopen the Icelandic Mission in 1975. Courtesy of the Geslison family

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missionary in the German-Austrian Mission, Byron's father thought it a good idea for him to ask permission to return home via Iceland, in order to gather genealogy for the family.²² Permission was granted by Church President Heber J. Grant, who also “requested that I study conditions there as to the advisability of [again] starting missionary work there.”²³

Byron's first encounter with his homeland was tumultuous: “A terrible storm came up as we approached the Westmann Islands and all we could do was drop anchor and wait. I got seasick, so sick that I was afraid I was going to die. I surely did not care if I did at that point. When the storm subsided enough they put me in a basket attached to a boom and lowered me into a smaller boat some distance from the ship.”²⁴ Byron was
soon greeted by relatives and spent the summer in Reykjavík living with his cousins.²⁵

In Reykjavík, Byron met Sighvatur Brynjólfsson, to whom his father had been writing for many years. On his first day in the capital city, Geslison also met a German-speaking Lutheran pastor: “I had the opportunity to speak to him and discuss the religious conditions of Iceland. . . . I told him about the Book of Mormon and he became very nervous and . . . left us on the spot, after a short greeting of departure.”²⁶

A Passion Is Born

After his first week, Byron was taken on a trip to southern Iceland “to the place where my father’s father and my great-grandparents were born.” This venture included a visit to a summer home, where he lodged for the night with a kind family. The encounter left a memorable impression on him, as indicated by his journal entry that night: “I was amazed at the hospitality of these Icelandic people.”²⁷ A week after this experience, Byron’s feelings and impressions ran deep. “I feel that I have a mission to perform in the land and that if I continue to hold the Lord’s commandments and be diligent, I shall be able to do it.” He summarized the summer of 1938 in his fatherland: “I feel really like I’m living in heaven.”²⁸ No wonder his departure was emotionally difficult. He recorded the memorable experience of watching his Icelandic relatives bid him farewell: “They all stood in a little group, some 12 or 13 of them, and when the boat pulled away, they all waved and waved. It was certainly pathetic. I surely had a hard time to keep from breaking down. To stand there and think that maybe I would never see them again was heartbreaking. My only comfort was that I hoped to come back someday.”²⁹
Although leaving was difficult, he did not go away empty handed. During that short summer he was able to gather about two thousand names of his ancestors in Reykjavík and in the Westmann Islands.³⁰ Byron later reminisced, “They took me to many parts of the land and I grew to love it. I met many relatives and made many friends. I met people in important positions and heads of Churches, this was good for my report to President Grant.”³¹

**Progress Is Slow but Sure**

Arriving back in Utah, Byron eagerly gave President Heber J. Grant a very favorable report concerning the potential missionary opportunities in Iceland, but apparently because of the outbreak of World War II, the intention to reestablish missionary efforts there was postponed. It would be nearly three decades later before the Church sent representatives to investigate the possibility of opening Iceland to missionary service.

9 July 1967 Elder Howard W. Hunter, and his wife, and Pres. Jacobson, of the Norwegian Mission arrived at Keflavík International Airport. They were met by Pres. Cupp and several of the [Keflavík] Branch members. They had come to see about opening up the mission field in Iceland. After spending several days with the Officials of Iceland in Reykjavik, they reported to us that they thought it would be very unwise to open the mission field at that time. They did say that they were going to recommend that “The Spoken Word” be translated into Icelandic and be broadcasted over the Icelandic Radio Station as a beginning to opening up the mission field here in Iceland.³²

Five years later, Elder Loren C. Dunn of the Seventy wrote a letter to the Danish Mission president Grant R. Ipsen,
suggesting he travel to Iceland and provide a report of the conditions there. Although President Ipsen had received Elder Dunn’s request around November of 1972, an emergency in the mission postponed the trip. After a six-month lapse, another letter requested that he visit Iceland. About May 1, 1973, Bernard P. Brockbank, president of the International Mission, asked that Ipsen help reorganize the leadership of the Keflavík Branch presidency. Five weeks later, Grant Ipsen and his wife were on their way to Iceland.³³

Upon arrival the Ipsens met with William Waites, acting branch president of the Keflavík Branch. They reviewed names and addresses of local Icelandic members and visited them in Reykjavík. Their first visit was to a young woman named Þórhildur Einarsdóttir, a convert of eighteen months. Next they visited the Kinski family, consisting of two brothers, Orn and Fálk Kinski, and their mother, Sister Jona Pallisdóttir; all had converted in Denmark before World War II. Ipsen writes, “In 1951, a missionary or a member of the Church came through to Iceland and ordained the two boys . . . Priests in the Priesthood. They [the Kinskis] indicated they had been in the [Church] services a few times from the Keflavik air force base, and then because of tightening of restrictions, they were not allowed on the base, and since that time they had not had any contact with the Church.”

Ipsen concluded his report as follows: “As I see it, the language would be the greatest hindrance. . . . I believe it would be a wonderful opportunity to preach the Gospel. I did not have an antagonistic feeling in the city or in the country. We do have the wonderful little Branch at the Keflavik Air Force Base, plus a nucleus of five or six possibly seven members in Rekavik [sic] or in the surrounding area.”³⁴

One LDS District compilation summarizes his visit:
An extensive report of President Ipsen indicated that Iceland would be a suitable place to open active proselyting again. The minutes of the Branch at Keflavik note that the Branch Presidency was reorganized by Danish Mission President Grant R. Ipsen, under the direction of the International Mission President Bernard P. Brockbank. It was noted that on 14 October 1973 there were 44 in attendance at the Sacrament Meeting, a new high.35

With this favorable report, the gears were greased to formally reopen missionary work in Iceland. One year later, Church officials contacted the Geslison family.

The Geslison Family Called and Arrive in Iceland

Byron T. Geslison recorded in his journal the initial contact made by one of the Church General Authorities in the late fall of 1974:

Brother Rictor [Elder Hartman Rector Jr.] first called while I was home to lunch on Tuesday Nov. 19, 1974. Said he wanted names of possible couples to Iceland. When I could come up with none he asked about us; Melva and me, as if that was his question from the first. He asked what would prevent our going. I responded that I was rusty in the Icelandic language and that we had two sons out in the mission field in the Far East of whom we had a responsibility.36

In overcoming the first obstacle, Elder Rector countered, “You can brush up, can’t you?” Byron responded that he thought he could. “I told him that given a little time I might come up with some better suggestions than us. He said to call him in a few days or he would get in touch with me. For the
next week I had some unusual feelings. I . . . couldn’t get it off my mind. I knew we had a destiny in Iceland.”

About a week later, Elder Rector called and Byron reiterated his concern for the twins. Elder Rector empathized, “The Brethren were concerned about that also.” Geslison noted, “I told him I could come up with no other names who fit the conditions called for. He said he would talk further with the Brethren and would get back to me.” Byron wrote in his diary, “We were to go back to Omaha for Christmas. . . . On the way back I had an impression of a definite call and that President Kimball & the first Presidency & others were involved in a discussion of us & Iceland & that we would be sent up to open Iceland to missionary work with Dave and Dan going with us. That was Monday Dec 30.” A week later, Byron and Melva were called into the office of their local bishop who informed them that he had received a call from Elder Rector: “Brother Rector had been requested by President Kimball to hurry the work in Iceland & not to delay in getting us called and up there; that the twins would go with us.”

An Obstacle Overcome

At the time of the call, the Geslisons’ twin sons, David and Daniel, would soon be returning from serving two-year, full-time missions for the Church, David in Korea and Daniel in Japan. Byron and Melva were naturally concerned that their sons were returning at the same time they would be leaving for the mission field. The problem was solved when President Spencer W. Kimball was impressed that the boys should immediately be called to serve another full-time mission to accompany their parents in Iceland. The day after his bishop issued the call, Byron wrote this letter to both sons, dated January 8, 1975:
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I hope what I am about to say will in NO WAY effect the remainder of your mission only for the better and I think it will have the effect to bring you to even greater dedication and devotion and that you will end your missions there in a blaze of glory. We knew you would do that all along. What you did not know however is that, you probably will not spend much time if any time at home for another possibly two years more or less. The First Presidency is about to call your mother and me to Iceland and they have approved that you and your brother go with us or meet us there whichever way it works out best after we get the official call. . . . We hope that you will not be too shocked by this and that you can [be] reconciled to changing whatever plans you have been making.⁴¹

Both twins were delighted with the news, excited to serve a mission with their parents and each other. As children, these twins had dreamed of the opportunity to one day serve a full-time mission together, and now, unexpectedly, their wishes could be realized. They returned to Spanish Fork on March 19, 1975. In less than three weeks they were delivering their mission reports and mission farewells the same day (April 6), and by April 18, 1975, the Geslison family had arrived in Iceland.⁴²

Briefings and Recommendations

Before the twins’ return and the flight to Iceland, Byron and Melva received instruction from Church leaders in Salt Lake City on February 13. Byron recorded the contents of this important meeting: “At 4:00pm we met with Elder Rector & Elder Bernard Brockbank who presides over the international mission. . . . We discussed timing, twins, contacts with Icelandic
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The Geslison family. Courtesy of the Geslison family


Byron was asked “to go thru the old Icelandic tracts and materials in the Church Historian’s office which might be used on a temporary basis, since there was no written material in Icelandic.” Geslison therefore “selected fourteen tracts which he felt would be useful in the work while waiting for the first official tracts to be printed, and the brethren agreed to make fifty copies of each and send to Iceland. . . . It was felt, because of its [the Icelandic Mission’s] peculiar problems, that it should be operated . . . as an emerging or miniature mission.”⁴⁴

During their February meeting with Church leaders, Geslison made several suggestions regarding moving the work forward in Iceland: “We also inquired if young men of Icelandic descent might be called later as missionaries. They thought that was a good idea. I made the suggestion that boys of Icelandic descent could have their Bishops and Stake
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Presidents put their names on the missionary recommendation form 'Of Icelandic Descent.’ Byron further recommended that “people of Icelandic descent . . . go the second mile and help with Icelandic missionary work by funneling their money thru Sp. Fork Utah Stake which could go into an ‘Icelandic Mission Fund.’”④⁵

Less than two months later, Byron and his family discovered a second-mile effort already performed by the Saints of his local area: the twins gave their combined mission reports and farewell addresses in a Spanish Fork chapel filled to overflowing with a congregation of six hundred to eight hundred. After this April 6 meeting concluded, Byron wrote, “We talked to many after & many came to the house. We had so many offers to help & so much given us that when . . . [donations were] counted up before we left, it was nearly $2500.00.”④⁶ Less than two weeks later, the Geslisons were on their way to Iceland.④⁷

A Hospitable Welcome

Byron recorded his first impressions as his family landed in Iceland to embark on their mission: “At the Keplavik Airbase we were met by Pres. Broadbent, Bentley & Curtis the Branch Presidency of Keplavik. They were so glad to see us & helped us so much. . . . Brother Curtis brought us to #17 Falkagata to be our home for several weeks. We met Bro Payne (Dr. David Payne) & he warmly welcomed us.”④⁸

Upon their arrival in the mission field, they found only one fully active member of the Church in the area: “Thorsteinn Jonsson, a fisherman who had been baptized about a year before and had been attending meetings at Keflavik Air Base, along with an occasional investigator.”④⁹ Þorsteinn proved to be a great blessing to the Geslisons, wearing himself out in providing for their needs. For example, a few days after their
arrival Byron wrote, “Bro Jonsson brought us fish and blankets . . . — 6 of them.” The following month, “Thorsteinn came & brought fish & lamb.”

Further, “Friday June 27th Thorsteinn comes from sea and begins looking for a place for us and offers us his place for as long as is needed.”

The Geslions’ initial living arrangements quickly changed due to Dr. Payne and his family’s return to Utah and a rental agreement that expired with no option for renewal. As a result, they struggled for several months to find other affordable living accommodations. Knowing of their plight, Thorsteinn gladly inconvenienced himself by giving up his apartment and living on his fishing boat for a time. The family soon learned that they should not tell Thorsteinn anything they were lacking,
for he would make great sacrifices to assure that their needs were met. In reminiscing, the Geslisons all agreed that no one helped them more than Þorsteinn Jónsson.⁵³

Opportunities for Growth Arise

The challenges at first seemed arduous. Less than two weeks after reaching Iceland, Byron recorded the visit of President Grant Ipsen and his wife, whom he described as “most gracious & wonderful.” During their short stay, Grant Ipsen, president of the Denmark Copenhagen Mission, conducted ecclesiastical business during a branch conference. Geslison recorded on May 1, 1975: “Pres. Ibsen presented the proposition that Reykjavik be taken from the International Mission & placed in the Denmark Copenhagen Mission. This was unanimous. Pres. Ibsen then presented Byron T. Geslison as the District President of the Iceland District of that mission called by the prophet of God. This was unanimous.” Such a transaction caused Byron to write, “I felt the weight of this great assignment now to go forth & open Iceland to missionary work.”⁵⁴

Byron also recalled, “Our task when we arrived, seemed rather formidable when we realized that we had no materials to work with, no tracts, no scripture, except the Bible, no building, no budget, no adequate housing, and no members to meet with, excepting the Servicemen’s Branch on NATO base.”⁵⁵ The weather and lack of missionary success sometimes discouraged the twins. David remembered, “Dad was always a stalwart of faith.”⁵⁶

Adjustments to miscellaneous costs were an immediate concern. Just after their arrival, Byron wrote, “We went to the store & I gave Melva Kr. [Kroner] 5000.00 & she thought she was rich but it took most of it for a few groceries and it was
Humor found its place in helping to deflect difficulties, such as when “Melva had bought a lamb leg smoked, but it turned out to be a lambs head.”

One technique Melva used to deal with such incidents was to write parodies to lighten the heaviness of disappointment that occasionally set in. One of a number of favorites faithfully recorded was titled “Our Ravings”:

Once upon a winter dreary  
As we tracted weak and weary  
Over the hardened lava roads  
With feet so Sore  
We started gently tapping  
And increased to timid rapping  
Rapping on the íbúð [apartment] door. . . .  
The door was opened slightly  
And our spirit lifted lightly  
We said; “We’re the Mormons”  
The door closed and nothing more  
And we went on our way undaunted  
Tho to die we really wanted,  
Just to die and nothing more. . . .  
Soon our hunger started growing  
And our weariness was showing  
And we headed for home and food galore.  
We started really hoping  
Sister Pres. had done her shopping
And we visioned all the treats
That were in store.
But Alas our hope was ended
As to each his plate was handed
Only fish and nothing more—^59

**Challenge of Learning the Language**

One of the immediate difficulties facing the Geslisons was learning Icelandic, reputedly one of the most challenging languages to master. But Byron maintained, “The twins learned it surprisingly fast and were giving Sunday School lessons in Icelandic in a matter of a few weeks, adapting the missionary discussions and augmenting them as best they could.”^60 Soon Byron requested that other missionaries be sent to assist in the work:

In July I wrote the Missionary Committee, as I had been instructed to do when I felt we would be ready for more missionaries. I learned sometime later that four Elders would arrive in September. It was thought that since the Icelandic language was so difficult and since good language is so important in missionary work, that we would enroll the Elders in the University of Iceland for a ten-week . . . Icelandic grammar course. The eight of us took the course and it proved to be an excellent thing to do. The group came through the course very well and it set a high standard for language excellence that was to become a goal for all missionaries in Iceland.^51
An Opportunity to Promote Favorable Public Opinion

Another opportunity that worked to their advantage presented itself when Byron was invited to present his religious views on national television on August 30, 1975. Byron recalled that the interviewer, Mr. Guðnason, “thought it best to conduct the interview in English with some Icelandic at the end of the interview.” He also noted, “I felt satisfied with it and felt the Lord was with me & would use it to help in His work here. The five minutes or so went rapidly. He asked if we weren’t discouraged being here or coming here when the early missionaries received so much persecution & because of the bad manner in which they had been received.” Geslison responded, “I told him—no—that on the contrary we were very encouraged [sic] and enthusiastic & that we didn’t feel that we had been received earlier so badly when or since about 200 families joined the Church.”

He also fielded a number of questions regarding Latter-day Saint doctrine, which included an explanation of how a belief in modern-day revelation, as well as how modern-day prophets and apostles made all the difference. Guðnason said he asked “how we expected to carry out our work & I told him the rest in Icelandic that missionaries were coming and they would work among the people. Then I bore my testimony.”

The interview was well received by the Icelanders, and as a result doctrinal misunderstandings were clarified. Byron was of the opinion that the interview was a “fair and factual report which did us much good.” Several newspapers reported the interview, thus aiding the missionaries with their proselytizing. One of the missionary twins, David Geslison, recalled that his father’s appearance on television helped generate discussion and open up more doors for proselytizing.

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One very important contact of the Geslisons was the influential bishop of Iceland. “The Bishop of Iceland has always been friendly since the first visit and has left his door open. He has a copy of all of our tracts, the Book of Mormon and Theodore Dedrickson’s book. He has helped us at different times that we had need of his help. His is one of the most important offices in Iceland, since he is head of the State Church and also has political influence.”

Iceland’s president entertained many visits from the Latter-day Saint missionaries. Geslison reported, “He has read three books on the archaeology of the Book of Mormon and is now reading A Marvelous Work and a Wonder. He was an archaeology professor at the University of Iceland before coming to this
high office. He is especially impressed with the microfilming project of the Church. . . . His door has always been open to me.”

*Translation Work Proceeds*

One of the next great challenges for the new mission president was to obtain written material prepared to aid in missionary work. Upon arriving in Iceland, Byron noted, “There were no missionary discussions, no tracts, no film strips, no literature at all excepting old tracts.” Thus one of the first aims was to hire a translator. Byron found a competent one in Hersteinn Pálsson, former editor of the local newspaper *Visir*. Pálsson first began work on the needed missionary discussions, and
tracts soon followed. Þorsteinn Jónsson also volunteered to help the Geslisons with the translation work, as well as with their Icelandic pronunciation.

After being in this new country for just a short time, Daniel Geslison recorded in his journal a special experience. He had spent the week memorizing the Joseph Smith story, which Þorsteinn Jónsson had translated from an English missionary tract into Icelandic. On Sunday, April 27, 1975, Daniel stood in a Sunday School class and told the assembled group that he was going to share the Joseph Smith story in Icelandic. He made the presentation without a flaw, an act that moved his new friend and tutor, Þorsteinn, to tears.

In addition to the effective missionary tracts, it was imperative that the Geslisons have a translation of the Book of Mormon. Byron reports: “After several unsuccessful attempts
to get the translation of the Book of Mormon underway, a man was hired in August [1977].” Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir had been assigned to supervise this translation and was an excellent resource.⁶⁹ Like Þorsteinn Jónsson, Sveinbjörg proved to be a great blessing to the work. In January 1976, she was initially contacted by Elder Brad Bearnson and Elder Blake Hansen, two additional missionaries who had joined the Geslisons by the fall of 1975.⁷⁰ In his journal dated May 2, 1976, Daniel Geslison recorded an impressive testimony that Sveinbjörg, not yet a member of the LDS faith, offered, which greatly moved all present: “It was at first a regular meeting and then Sveinbjörg stood up—and bore the most spiritual testimony that I have heard from a nonmember—She said I’m not a Mormon ‘not yet’—Then she bore testimony. . . . I can’t explain in words how wonderful the spirit was in that meeting. There was not a dry eye in the whole audience.”⁷¹ Her testimony and example left an impact on many.

Production of Proselytizing Media

Another proselytizing tool which needed attention was that of filmstrips. Byron recalled:

At the beginning we used the English and Danish filmstrips which were available. It was readily apparent that to be effective we needed filmstrips in Icelandic, for since some people understood some English and Danish, yet few understood in sufficient depth to get the messages of the filmstrips. . . . One morning I felt especially impressed to visit the radio station. I had met the gentlemen in charge of the national radio and television and he had been friendly and seemed to have some interest in us. On the stairs I met Peter Peterson, who was one of the announcers on radio and in charge of some
radio programming. He expressed himself to the effect that he felt bad that the earlier missionaries had been treated so shamefully and he didn’t want that to happen this time and he wanted to do what he could to help us out. I offered him the use of some Tabernacle Choir tapes I had and asked him if we could work out something so that we could use their studios and technical help to produce some filmstrips for our work. He took me to the man who programmed the studio and we set up a series of appointments.²²

This process led to the successful production of sixteen filmstrips by the fall of 1976. To ensure the best, given their resources, Byron “secured the professional services of Iceland’s ‘golden voice,’ Hersteinn Pálsson, and used members and missionaries for the various parts needed.” Byron reported their effectiveness in “serving a great purpose in helping carry our message to the Icelandic people and have helped to build the morale of the missionaries and members a great deal.” He further recognized that the filmstrips had been used effectively in public schools and open house programs, as well as other Church functions.²³

Church Auxiliaries Established

By August of 1976, two small ecclesiastical units known as branches were functioning in Iceland, one on the NATO base in Keflavik and the other in Reykjavik. Since the arrival of the Geslison family, the Keflavik Branch had increased to about 130 members of both American and Icelandic converts.²⁴ Church auxiliaries for young men and young women were soon organized in the Reykjavik Branch. The women’s organization (Relief Society) was also formed, Sister Melva Geslison acting as president.²⁵ Melva was influential in lifting the Saints
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at most meetings with the music she played on an old pump organ, transported from Utah through funds donated by local Saints of Spanish Fork, Utah.⁷⁶

Finding a place to have Church meetings in Reykjavík was difficult. As his first mission drew to a close in December 1977, Byron reported:

Up to recently we have rented a home with an extra large living room and have held all of our meetings there. . . . Just recently we were miraculously able to secure a hall with three adjacent spaces for classrooms. This facility is in the best part of Reykjavik on the Main street where the center of activity is. . . . The missionaries can use it in many ways to improve missionary work. It gives us permanency & status because of the excellent location and type of facility. It will give us excellent exposure, since most everyone frequents this part of town. It has done much to give the members a feeling of pride in their facility. . . . Investigators will feel much freer to attend our meetings now than when they were held in the home. It will give us an additional reason to become recognized by the government. One of the requirements is to show proof of permanency.⁷⁷

Opposition seemed to follow closely on the heels of each small success. In late December, Byron explained: “The main opposition directed against the Church at the present is coming from a quarterly publication which has connections with the State church. The Editor has told us his goal is to drive us out of Iceland as was done many years ago. He has written two bad articles about us. He permitted us to answer his first article but has said he will not permit this again.” Further, it was reported that two brothers who had once been LDS Church members were now doing everything possible to hurt the
Church and were also supporting the editor in his opposition to the Latter-day Saint cause. But Byron Geslison remained optimistic, believing that the opposition would in fact strengthen and unify the local congregation of Saints.⁷⁸

_Iceland Dedicated for the Preaching of the Gospel_

One important event that helped to bring permanency to the Icelandic Saints was the dedication of the land for the preaching of the gospel. Byron recalled:

In the summer of 1977 we received word that Elder [Joseph B.] Wirthlin had been assigned by the Brethren to come to Iceland and dedicate the land. Elder Wirthlin came in September 1977. A Conference was held and in connection with it the dedication took place. Elder Wirthlin sent word to select a site, preferably on a hill overlooking Reykjavik. Oskahlid, a hill in the south part of the city overlooking Reykjavik, was recommended. Elder Wirthlin was pleased with this site. . . . The dedication was to take place between the morning and afternoon sessions of Conference. The weather was cold and storms were about the area and the weather was very threatening. . . . Elder Wirthlin and I decided on holding it inside and so I announced it. The members were quite unhappy with this decision and so expressed themselves. Trudy, a teenage girl from Keflavik Branch, said that it would not rain, that we had made an appointment with the Lord and He wouldn’t let it rain. Brother Wirthlin and I consulted and decided to go on the hill for the dedication. . . . [We] met on the hill and the impressive and inspiring dedication took place. It did not rain and it proved to be a beautiful and a great experience for all. It was truly a great historical milestone in the history of missionary work in Iceland.⁷⁹
Among other things, Elder Wirthlin said, “I dedicate the land of Iceland for the preaching of the Gospel and for the establishment of Thy Church and Kingdom on this land. I bless this people that there may be many wonderful sons and daughters of Thee who will recognize the truth and embrace the Gospel.” Elder Wirthlin was also mindful of the leaders of the country: “I invoke my blessing upon the government. Through the principles of the gospel may they be inspired so that peace may always prevail in this land.” Finally, he blessed the elements of this unique country: “I invoke Thy blessing of this day on this beautiful land, which is a land of beautiful lakes and tall mountains covered with eternal glaciers. Wilt thou bless it abundantly? May it produce the necessities of life for this people.”

Although the wheels of the Church would roll slowly in Iceland, the message of Mormonism would steadily go forth. And though the Latter-day Saints felt it was God’s decree that the good people of Iceland be given the opportunity to hear the fullness of His saving truths, it was the meek and humble who made it all happen. The Geslison family was the right tool at the right time for the job at hand. Gentle but determined, meek yet wise, they sought for divine direction day after day to move the work forward. They endured discouragement and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Yet they endured. Who can enumerate the incalculable blessing these years of missionary service wrought upon the family, let alone the lives they influenced for good in Iceland? Perhaps the gratitude and expressions of commendations which they so deserve will be insignificant compared to the rewards and honor heaped upon them in a future day.
Notes

1. Assistant Church historian Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Company, 1941), writes, “Iceland was a part of the Scandinavian Mission from 1851 to 1894, when it was transferred to the British Mission. A few years later it was listed as a separate mission which was continued until 1914. In 1930 the few local Saints on Iceland belonged to the Danish Mission. For several years no Elders from Zion [Utah] were sent to Iceland, but in 1930 two Elders, James C. Ostegar and F. Lynn Michelsen, labored there for a few months.” Christensen, “History of the Danish Mission,” 129–30, suggests, “Failure to establish a strong organization in Iceland was due to a combination of things: (1) the great distance which separates Iceland from Church headquarters in Copenhagen, (2) languages difference between Iceland and Denmark, (3) opposition, and (4) emigration.”

2. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (1935–40), typescript in possession of Melva Geslison, August 28, 1938 (p. 341), notes that upon arrival in Copenhagen, Elder Geslison (who had been serving in the German-Austrian Mission) “went out to Sunday School and met missionaries and Pres. Garff. They told me that they had missionaries in the summer of 1930, but they called them out, thinking it was not of any use.”

3. Christensen, “History of the Danish Mission,” 131. In a talk titled “Icelandic Settlement in Utah 100 Years Old,” given in 1955 at the centennial anniversary of the Icelandic settlement in Spanish Fork, Petur Eggerz, counselor of the legislation of Iceland, stated: “Two years ago Utah’s Genealogical Society sent welcome representatives to Iceland. They took microfilms of all books and documents in possession of the National Archives in Iceland.” Thus, the microfilming of these records in 1953 may also be viewed as part of the preparation for Iceland to again receive missionaries.
4. David B. Timmins, “The Second Beginning of the Church in Iceland,” unpublished document in the author’s possession, 1. The author wishes to express appreciation to Clark T. Thorstenson, who later served as the Icelandic Consul to the western United States, for allowing him to have a copy of this manuscript, which is also located at the Church Archives in Salt Lake City. In a manuscript in the files of the LDS Icelandic Branch in the Reykjavík region titled “A Brief History of the Icelandic Branch,” comp. Donald R. Knight, 1, the very first entry to a written Church record since the closure of the mission of 1914 states the following for the date of May 3, 1959: “Kenneth Fowles, Elder, ‘presiding and conducting’ First meeting held in Reykjavik at the home of Brother and Sister Timmins. Bro. Timmins is listed as employed at the American Embassy.” The second entry, dated May 6, 1959, notes: “Wednesday evening meeting at Keflavik Naval Air Station. The pattern was get for regular Sunday and Wednesday meetings which continued unbroken until 2 Nov 1960. During this time attendance at the meetings ranged from 3 to 12.” Page 2 of this document indicates that these assorted notes were compiled by Donald R. Knight, September 16, 1972.


The novel *Paradise Reclaimed* (Timmins misspoke; the title is not *Paradise Regained*), published in 1962, focuses on an LDS convert who immigrated to Spanish Fork and later returned to Iceland, where Laxness asserts he reclaimed paradise. This novel is the most well-known book concerning Latter-day Saints in all of Iceland. Though well written, unfortunately this novel presents a picture of Mormonism that is not altogether accurate. In an interview in the winter of 2000 with the now-late Byron Geslison, who served several missions to Iceland, Byron informed the author that one evening when Geslison was in the home of Laxness, the famous poet ad-
mitted that he did take poetic license in relating the history of the Latter-day Saints. Geslison further noted, “Halldor Kiljan Laxness, Iceland’s Nobel Prize winner in Literature, has received us several times and has much of our literature. He and his wife have offered to help us and there is a letter on file from him stating his desire to help us where he can” (Byron T. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 17, in author’s possession).


9. Christensen, “History of the Danish Mission,” 131. For the interesting story of events leading up to missionary work again opening up in Iceland, see also the 1973 typescript of interview of Grant Ruel Ipsen (president of the Danish Mission), Church Archives, 1–6.


11. Christensen, “History of the Danish Mission,” 214, notes, “On April 1, 1920, the Norwegian Mission was organized as an independent mission as it was separated from Denmark”—in other words, from the Danish Mission.

12. In a November 20, 1964, letter written from Oslo, Norway, by Dean A. Peterson, Norwegian Mission president, to Geir Hallgrímsson, mayor of Reykjavík, President Peterson informed the mayor that two young Americans were going to be visiting him from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Peterson wrote, “They are Mr. Richard C. Torgerson and Mr. P. Bryce Christensen. Mr. Torgerson has been in Norway for the past two and a half years and Mr. Christensen has been in Denmark for the same length of time. The purpose of their trip as representatives for the Church, is to obtain information for President [Ezra Taft] Benson in the possible consideration of sending missionaries to labor in Iceland.” President Benson was at this time a member of the Church’s Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and also the president of the European Mission. A copy of this letter was faxed to me by Bryce Christensen on February 22,
2000. The author expresses appreciation to Bryce for his help. It also seems reasonable to suppose that one missionary was sent from each mission as the question may have arisen as to which mission Iceland would fit better in: the Danish Mission or the Norwegian Mission.


14. Bryce Christensen to R. Earl Sorensen, December 9, 1964, 1, letter in author’s possession. Christensen, 3, also points out that the LDS group leader for Iceland was “Ssgt. Billy N. Jensen, USAF.” The following year, “A Brief History History of the Icelandic Branch,” comp. Donald R. Knight, Reykjavik Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, 11, notes, “12 Dec. 1965 Good news has been given our fine group. We are now a branch in the British Stake (Mission). Our Branch President Billy Jensen, will go to London next month to make the final arrangements. We are a fast growing group.” Six months later this same Church record notes, 12, “12 June 1966 Last Sunday night the branch held a fairwell for Billy and Marilyn Jensen and their family. Billy had been a tool in the Lords hand in establishing the branch in Iceland. . . . Last month Brother Leonard Jensen was sustained and went to London and was set apart as Branch President and Pres. Billy Jensen was released as Branch President.” In a separate one-page manuscript titled “Relief Society in the Icelandic Branch,” apparently compiled from the records of the LDS Icelandic Reykjavík Branch, 1, an extract from a Relief Society meeting notes for the date of January 25, 1966, “Icelandic Branch was organized on 16 Jan 1966 after Brother Billy N. Jensen went to London to be called to the position of Branch President under [the] British Mission and given authority to organize the Branch, IT WAS THE FIRST TO BE ORGANIZED SINCE 1947 IN ICELAND.” Apparently this refers to the Relief Society organized on the Keflavik NATO base, largely made up of Americans, and not an Icelandic branch. The 1947 refer-
ence is very interesting, but thus far no information has been found to provide more details. In another one-page manuscript titled "Primary in the Icelandic Branch," which contains extracts apparently compiled from LDS Reykjavík Branch Records, 1, one extract notes, “Primary for 65–66 had 5 teachers and officers and there were 7 LDS and 1 non-member children. . . . The non-member child apparently was baptized because the later enrollment later became 8 LDS.”

15. Christensen to Sorensen, December 9, 1964, 3.
17. Christensen to Sorensen, December 9, 1964, 3.
20. Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah*, 85–86, wrote that Gudný “was born September 6, 1794, in Kirkulaekur, Teigur, Rangarvalla, Iceland, the daughter of Erasmus Eyjolfsson and Katrine Asgeirsson. She was married to Arni Haflidasson on October 4, 1828. They had six children, but only two lived to maturity. Her husband was drowned while fishing in 1847. Gudny then worked in a fish-packing plant.” Gudný joined the LDS Church and left Iceland in 1857. However, she did not arrive in Spanish Fork until 1859 because the small Icelandic group she emigrated with stopped in Fairfield, Iowa, in order to obtain the funds needed to proceed to Utah (see Mission History of the Icelandic Mission, 1857). According to David B. Geslison, she was known as “Old Gudný,” and it was said that she did not walk across the plains with her handcart, but rather that she “ran across the plains” (interview of David, Daniel, and Melva Geslison by Fred E. Woods, May 22, 2005 in Spanish Fork, Utah). Allred, 86, further notes, “She died June 14, 1888, and was buried in Spanish Fork City Cemetery.”

21. “Autobiography of Byron T. Geslison,” 1. This is really an unpublished autobiographical sketch, a copy of which is in author’s
possession. The author expresses appreciation to David B. Geslison for allowing him to copy this document.

22. *The Directory of the General Authorities and Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Presiding Bishopric, 1936), 91, evidences Byron commenced his mission under Roy A. Welker, president of the German-Austrian Mission. However, by the time his mission concluded in 1938, *The Directory of the General Authorities and Officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Presiding Bishopric, 1938), 92, indicates that President Albert C. Rees was overseeing the mission with whom Geslison would have sought permission to visit Iceland on his way home. Thanks is expressed to Melvin L. Bashore, senior librarian at the LDS Church Library in Salt Lake City for providing the author with this information. The Diary of Byron T. Geslison (1935–40), December 1935, 7, lists the name of President Walker. Apparently there was a mistake made in this typescript, and the name should have been Welker. The Diary of Byron T. Geslison (1935–40), June 19, 1938, 300, notes, “President Rees gave me my release.”


25. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (1935–40), July 10–11, 1938, 314–15, reveals that Byron was met by a relative referred to as “Sigrater Brynhofson’s brother.” Geslison soon met other Icelandic relatives referred to as “Bjorg Sighvatsdottir [and] two young grandchildren.” After spending just one day on the Westmann Islands, he went to Reykjavik by ship.

26. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (1935–40), July 10–11, 1938, 316–17. Byron’s diary also reveals that he had several missionary experiences with his Icelandic relatives. For example, diary entries for the dates of August 11 and 20 (pages 332, 336) reveal that he taught a relative named “Ganja” the Joseph Smith story and other principles of the restored gospel. His relatives seemed to be particularly
struck by the health code Byron strictly adhered to, which included abstaining from alcohol, smoking, tea, and coffee. See, for example, diary entries for July 14, 1938 (318), and August 21, 1938 (337). The August entry reveals the wonderful relationship Byron had developed with his relatives, although he would not bend in his commitment to living such a code: “I told them that I didn't condemn them for it [smoking or drinking alcohol and coffee], I merely didn't do it myself. I said I probably have other faults not of that nature, which are just as bad and could be worse.”

30. Interview of Byron T. Geslison by Fred E. Woods, February 18; 2000, Spanish Fork, Utah.
35. “History of District,” Reykjavík Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, 3. This document is a compilation of salient features of the district taken from other Church records.


40. Byron T. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 4. A copy of this report was given to me by Byron before his passing on October 10, 2001. This typed manuscript is twenty-eight pages long. On the cover is a note probably written by Byron: “This report was presented to the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve and the missionary committee. 4 copies were deposited in the Church Historian’s office.”

41. Letter of Byron T. Geslison to his sons Daniel and David Geslison, dated January 8, 1975. The author thanks Dan for permitting him to have a copy of this letter.


46. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (November 1974 to July 7, 1975), April 6, 1975. The following month Byron’s diary, dated June [May] 22, also reveals that LDS Icelanders in Spanish Fork continued to financially assist the Geslison family mission: “We received $200.00 from Myrtle [Johnson] and [her twin sons] Richard & Robert Johnson. We can’t get over their generosity.”

47. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (November 1974 to July 7, 1975), April 6, 1975. Byron also notes that prior to their departure, a Salt
Lake City travel agency staff dealing with their transportation desired to see them: “The people in Murdock Travel heard we were the ones going to Iceland, [they] wanted . . . to see what we looked like & what Icelander’s looked like.”

48. Diary of Byron T. Geslison (November 1974 to July 7, 1975), April 1975. An entry from this diary dated March 10, 1975, reveals that Payne had previously been in contact with the Geslison family and suggests that high costs of housing probably dictated why the Geslisons were temporarily staying with Payne. Byron wrote that on this date the Geslisons received a letter “from Dr. David Payne, Melva read it over the phone. Price’s seem very high. Many good tips.” The Geslison family first lived in the apartment that Dr. David Payne had been renting, who was a visiting BYU professor teaching sociology at the University of Iceland. According to a document titled “History of the District,” Icelandic District Records, Reykjavík Iceland, 3, at this time Dr. Payne, his wife, and their infant daughter were Latter-day Saints from Provo. This record also indicates that “there were five known Icelanders living in Reykjavik, who were members of the Church. The small group functioned as a dependent group of the Branch at Keflavík.” It appears that “dependent group,” stated herein actually means that a small group of Saints met independently but were still under the jurisdiction of the Keflavík Branch. After the Payne family departed, the Geslisons had to move as well. At the commencement of their stay, the twins slept on the floor with coats over them for warmth (interview of Daniel, David, and Melva Geslison by Fred E. Woods in Spanish Fork, Utah, May 22, 2005).

49. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 4–5. In the May 22, 2005, interview with the Geslisons, the author further learned that Þorsteinn had first heard about the Church during World War II (1943–44). Some unknown person had approached him while he was apparently reading anti-Mormon literature and
handed him a copy of the Book of Mormon with the brief comment that he would like it a lot better than what he was reading. Years later, Þorsteinn corresponded with Salt Lake City about the Latter-day Saint beliefs and as a result, the Church assigned Utah Icelanders John Y. Bearson and Kate B. Carter to stay in contact with him for the Church. In 1974 Þorsteinn was baptized by a military officer stationed at Keflavík named William Waites, from Moses Lake, Washington. One of the things the Geslisons noticed about his apartment was that he had purchased nearly every book the Church had ever published. The Reykjavík Dependent Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, 1976, 1, notes, “Upon their arrival to Iceland, the Geslisons found a small military branch of the Church on the NATO airbase in Keflavík. Part of the membership of the branch were 8 Icelanders. Thorsteinn Jonsson, a fisherman and only active Icelandic, had a testimony of the Church for 15 years during which time he regularly bought and read Church books. He was finally contacted by the elders of the Branch, baptized and ordained an elder a year and a half before the Geslisons arrived. A Book of Mormon in English, given him by an American friend while at sea, led to gaining of a testimony long before he met Pres. William Waites and Clyde T. Swasey of the Keflavík Branch.” Þorsteinn Jónsson was born January 9, 1918, and died October 12, 1997. The notation of “8 Icelanders” in this document deserves special mention, inasmuch as the “8” is the only item written in bold. Dan Geslison suggested to the author that this number should actually be four. It appears that the “8” may have been added later.

52. According to the Diary of Byron T. Geslison (November 1974 to July 7, 1975), May 6, 1975, Brother Payne left Iceland on
May 6. The Diary of Byron T. Geslison (June 8, 1975, to April 1977) discloses that during their first few months in Iceland the Geslison family faced the challenge of high costs in both lodging and furniture. See, for example, entries for the dates of July 24, 26; and August 5, 8, 1975. In fact, diary entries for September 11–12, 1975, reveal that they did not find an apartment to rent and adequate furniture until the day before two young elders (Gary Buckway and Blake Hansen) had been sent to help augment missionary work in Iceland. The furniture consisted of “six beds and 6 chairs, a sofa set with two chairs and two tables.” The six beds made it possible for Byron, Melva, the twins, and the new missionaries all to sleep under the same roof. This needed success just before the arrival of the missionaries seems to have been largely influenced by Byron’s tenacity and faith. Although the Geslison family had struggled to find adequate lodging for over two months, in a July 26, 1975, entry Byron writes optimistically, “I know he [God] will guide us to the right apartment. . . . We will not be overcome nor will we be discouraged because of what the Adversary can do because God’s power is so much greater. The stormy gloomy days merely cause me to try twice or 3 times as hard to be cheerful, positive & faithful & rely on the merits & mercies of Christ for I have no such merits nor powers myself outside His matchless power. I can only glory in Him.”


55. “Autobiography of Byron T. Geslison,” 14. At the conclusion of the Geslison interview, May 23, 2005, the point was made that the LDS servicemen on the NATO base in Keflavík were a great strength to the Geslisons and provided them with whatever they needed, including transportation, food, and if needed, more men for the missionaries to go out proselytizing with. Finally, when they stepped
onto the base, they felt as if they had a reprieve from the rugged Icelandic experience they were encountering, perhaps the next best thing to home.

59. Journal of Daniel Geslison, no date included.
63. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 7. In the spring of 2004, the author visited Iceland to conduct research and to lecture at the University of Iceland on the topic of Icelandic Mormon immigration to Utah. During his visit to Reykjavík, he was also interviewed on Iceland’s prime-time television program Kastljós í, on radio, and also by Guðni Einarsson, a reporter from Iceland’s newspaper Morganblaðið. Each of the interviews provided opportunities to discuss the history of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at home and abroad as well as their religious beliefs which stimulated immigration to Utah in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
64. Phone conversation with David Geslison, May 19, 2005.
67. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 4. The Diary of Byron T. Geslison (June 8, 1975, to April 1977), June 12, 1975, evidences that Pállson was paid $165.00 [kroner] for translat-
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ing a tract called the *Plan of Salvation*. On this same date, Geslison also recorded that he and a small group had visited with the king of Sweden, “King Karl Gustav,” for about an hour and a half at the Swedish embassy. King Gustav was given a copy of the Book of Mormon during this visit.


69. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 14. See “Historical Events [of the] Reykjavík Dependent Branch,” Reykjavík Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, 1977, 1, for the date of July 24, 1977, notes that “Sveinbjörg Gudmundsdottir was called to be an official translator for the Church. She will quit her job at samband to do this. This will be a full-time job for her.” Although Byron estimated that the translation would be done in about a year and a half, it was not completed until the end of 1979 and was not actually printed until 1981.

70. Phone conversation with David Geslison, May 23, 2005.

71. Journal of Daniel Geslison, May 2, 1976. Daniel also notes, June 6, 1976, that Sveinbjörg was baptized into the LDS Church. This was the first baptism in the mission in over a year.

72. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 15. An entry from the Diary of Byron T. Geslison (June 8, 1975, to April 1977), August 25, 1975, notes, “We decided to go to the radio station & talked to the head man. He was very kind & polite & seemed very interested & wanted to talk to me about the radio discussion. He said he would listen to the Tabernacle Choir tapes & Spoken Word. . . . I told him that it was the most famous & longest continuous program on radio in America & that they could use it weekly as they would like.”

73. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 15–16. Geslison, 23, also points out that filming of another sort was going on which influenced family history research for both Latter-day
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Saints as well as the people of Iceland in general. “The government allowed the Church to come in and microfilm many of their records and they have a set of these microfilms in their national library, which are made available to their people for use. The members have been anxious to begin their genealogies as soon as they have learned why the Church has placed so much emphasis on it and what their individual responsibilities are.” In his December 1977 report at the close of his first mission to Iceland, Geslison, 28, recommended the erection of an LDS Branch Genealogy Library in Iceland that he felt would increase the amount of family history research because the National Library of Iceland allowed usage of the genealogical films only during its operating hours between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., which did not generally fit into the busy schedule of LDS Church members.

74. “History of the District,” Icelandic District Records, Reykjavik, Iceland, 3, notes, “On 8 August 1976 a Dependent Branch [known as the Reykjavik Dependent Branch] was organized to serve the members in Reykjavik. At this time there were ten Elder Missionaries and one Senior Couple serving in Iceland as Missionaries.” The Reykjavik Dependent Branch Records, Reykjavik, Iceland, 1, states that by July 1976, “The Keflavik Branch had grown unbelievably to about 130 members since the arrival of President Geslison and the missionaries, not only with Icelandic converts but also with American Mormon families receiving military assignments to Iceland. The members of the Keflavik Branch have done everything possible to foster the beginning missionary labor. On July 25th, 1976, the first sacrament meeting in Icelandic was held in Kopavogur with President Geslison presiding and conducting.”

The Church News also published the glad tidings of the growth of the Church in Iceland. An article titled “Hostility Melts in Iceland” (August 20, 1977, 8–9) noted that “In . . . 1975 a branch of the Church was organized in Iceland on the American military installation at Keflavik. About 130 members, American servicemen and
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their families, were organized as part of the Denmark Copenhagen Mission. . . . Now an additional branch of the Church has been organized at Reykjavik.


76. Interview of Daniel, David, and Melva Geslison, May 22, 2005. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland December 1977,” 23, notes that the Icelandic branch in Reykjavik was strengthened through music: “Thru the help of several people in Spanish Fork a small organ was secured and sent to us. This was a great help in our work. There have been about fifty [LDS hymns] translated and a few old Icelandic hymns that can be used, so that now a small song folder is being prepared for the use of the Icelandic Branch until enough hymns can be translated to print a songbook.” The Diary of Byron Geslison (June 8, 1975, to April 1977), September 1, 1975, notes, “mailed letter to Frank O’Brien clearing the way for the organ.”

77. Geslison, “Mission Report of Iceland: December, 1977,” 20–21. In late 1977, Geslison further writes, 22, “The Church approved the construction of a chapel in the early spring of 1977. The status of this project is that the City of Reykjavik has tentatively approved the building site, but final approval is being awaited as it goes through the City Engineer, the building committee, zoning committee and other agencies. . . . The site appears to be a good one. It will be in the center of greater Reykjavik, readily accessible by bus and near roads which lead directly from the larger population centers near Reykjavik, such as Kopavogur and Hafnafjordur.” However, a chapel would not be dedicated in Iceland until the summer of 2000.

On the day that Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin dedicated the land of Iceland for missionary work, there was one standing among the crowd who would play a vital role in bringing forth a mighty tool to further the work. Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, a convert from the previous year, soon translated the Book of Mormon into Icelandic. From the time that the missionaries first showed her the religious record, Sveinbjörg remembered that she knew the book was true. In her words, “I had just such a strong feeling after that first discussion that I couldn’t get it out of my mind. It was like the Lord was telling me directly, ‘You’d better listen!’” Four months later Sveinbjörg obeyed those feelings and was baptized.¹

Hired in 1977 to oversee translation, she became involved in the actual translation and eventually translated the book’s entirety with the exception of the book of Alma. By the end of 1979 the work was complete.²
This year was also a milestone in the modern history of the LDS Church in Iceland: the Reykjavík Branch fell under the direction of Icelandic leadership for the first time. Þorsteinn Jónsson was called to serve as branch president on July 15, 1979.³ A number of faith-promoting events took place this year, including a joint pioneer celebration with members of the Keflavík and Reykjavík branches. Firesides and socials were held, and baptisms performed. Bruce Lake, the director of seminaries and institutes in Europe, also visited the Reykjavík Branch to uplift the Saints.⁴

Branch activities continued the following year, including the annual Pioneer Day celebration, youth fishing trips to Þingvellir, and a hike up Hagafell. The arrival of new missionaries soon presented some comic relief inasmuch as Elder Kory Ainsworth stood five feet six inches tall, while his companion Shaun Campbell towered at seven feet. The year concluded with a notable event on December 9, 1980, when the LDS Icelandic youth presented the president of Iceland with a copy of the Book of Mormon in French. Before her presidential appointment, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir taught French at the local university. The French version was also chosen because the Icelandic Book of Mormon was not then available. It was published the following year.⁵
On November 1, 1980, another special event took place when Páll Ragnarson was baptized by Hlynur Óskarsson and confirmed by district president Arthur W. Hansen.⁶ By June of 1982, Páll was serving the Icelandic Saints as president of the Reykjavík Branch. Though greatly loved, Páll served less than six months before his life suddenly ended in a tragic accident which took not only his life but also that of the former branch president.⁷ The historical record for the Reykjavík Branch for the memorable year of 1983 records the following:

The History of Iceland started very early in 1983, for it was on New Years Day that about 11 of the members of the Reykjavík Branch decided to hike a mountain which has become a yearly event. Only three finally went on the hike: Vidir Oskarsson, Pall Ragnarsson and Gunnar Oskarsson. They were climbing Vífilsfell and Pall fell first. Gunnar went back to help and slipped also. They both fell many feet. Vidir went for help. When the help arrived, Pall was dead and Gunnar died in the Helicopter on the way to the hospital. Pall was the Branch President and Gunnar was the former Branch President. With the loss of these two stalwart pillars of the Branch, it threw the young Branch into deep mourning. It was somewhat to the Branch, the loss spoken of, like the loss to the Church when Joseph and Hyrum were murdered.⁸

A few days later, Ólafur Ólafsson wrote:

Saturday, January 1st, I received the terrible news that the branch president of the Reykjavik Branch, br. Pall Ragnarsson had died that morning in an accident along with br. Gunnar Sigurdur Oskarsson, district group leader. Because of this I, Olafur Valur Olafsson, 2nd counselor to the Branch President, will act as the Branch President until a new President will be called. May the will of heavenly Father be done...
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here on earth as in heaven and that he will bless me so that my words and works will be according to his will and be pleasing, that he will see me as his humble & true servant in the calling I have so unexpectedly acquired.⁹

A Call to Return

Just three days after this tragic event, Byron and Melva received a phone call reporting the deaths of Páll and Gunnar. That night Byron recorded in his journal, “I couldn't sleep very well thinking about it. My first thoughts were that as much as they were needed in Reykjavík, they are needed more as missionaries in the spirit world.”¹⁰ The following day he wrote, “Can't get Gunnar & Pal off my mind & the Saints of Reykjavik.”¹¹

Byron’s journal also suggests that although he and Melva had returned from their mission several years before (1979), they were still very active in helping with missionary work in Iceland. For example, in his entry for January 11, 1983, Byron disclosed that he was trying to get 377 microfilms sent to Iceland to aid in genealogy work.¹² He was also involved with checking translations for temple work. On January 15 he mentioned that the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, wanted his help with a four-hundred-page Icelandic grammar book.¹³

Just two days later one of Byron's local ecclesiastical leaders (President W. Howard Barney) called to inform him that a member of the missionary committee had inquired as to the availability of Byron and Melva returning to Iceland for a second mission. Byron was then serving as stake patriarch in his area and was a valuable asset to his local region. Byron wrote in his journal that President Barney informed the mis-
Byron and Melva Geslison were called to serve a second mission to Iceland in 1983 after the tragic deaths of Páll Ragnarsson and Gunnar Óskarsson. A decade later Byron received the Order of the Falcon. Courtesy of Daniel Geslison

Byron and Melva Geslison were called to serve a second mission to Iceland in 1983 after the tragic deaths of Páll Ragnarsson and Gunnar Óskarsson. A decade later Byron received the Order of the Falcon. Courtesy of Daniel Geslison
asked how soon I could go. . . . I told him about our situation but that we would not say ‘no’ to a call.” Millet suggested that he could arrange to have Brother and Sister Jackson, then serving in the Copenhagen Mission, transferred to Iceland until the Geslisons could make arrangements to return.¹⁶

The next day, Byron and Melva drove to Salt Lake City to meet with their family and share the news of another mission to Iceland. Byron noted on January 27, “We drove home from SL [Salt Lake] grateful that all the family were willing to have us go & heed this call.”¹⁷ Less than a week later, Byron and Melva learned through President Barney that the Jacksons would spend the remainder of their mission in Iceland and that the Geslisons would not need to be there until June 1.¹⁸

The Geslisons’ Preparation for a Second Mission to Iceland

Byron recalled that during this several month interval “we assisted in the collection and preparation of materials for the visitors’ center. These materials were planned to arrive concurrent with our arrival in Iceland. We also arranged to have microfilms, [microfiche], and other general materials sent, for the Reykjavík Branch library.”¹⁹ His journal discloses numerous efforts of the Geslison family to help move the LDS Church forward in Iceland. A week of journal extracts provides a glimpse into a very active life of service:

Monday Feb. 7, 1983 Worked on Icelandic grammar book. . . . We studied Icelandic for home evening. . . .

Saturday Feb 12, 1983 The twins brought plans & specifications for the visitors center in Iceland. It looks good & I will try to help them gather what they need. They are working with Bro Holt in the Church Office Bldg who is in charge of
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displays etc. The church will pay or spend about $30,000—
on it. . . .

Monday Feb 14, 1983 . . . I worked on the Icelandic MTC

Tuesday Feb 15, 1983 Worked on Grammar book & finally
finished it. Glad to get it done.²⁰

Just one week after Byron finished work on the grammar
book for the MTC, he and Melva began advertising in a local
newspaper an Icelandic course they planned to teach together
out of their home. Several expressed interest in this course, in-
cluding Sonja Despain, supervisor for Scandinavian languages
at the MTC. Sonja phoned the Geslisons and asked “if by any
chance we could help teach at [the] MTC from 10:00am to
12:45 each day.” Byron wrote, “After talking with Melva we
decided to try it & see if we could work it in. She [Sonya] was
quite surprised.”²¹ On February 28, 1983, Byron began to teach
two new young missionaries at the MTC—Craig Wolfe and
Steven Carpenter. After seven weeks of intensive training in
Icelandic, Byron recorded, “Today is the last day teaching at the
MTC. Elder Carpenter finished 4 discussions. Elder Wolfe 3.”²²

As mentioned earlier, in January of this same year Byron
was trying to purchase microfilms to help with genealogy work
in Iceland. The cost of the 377 films was $5.00 per roll for a
total cost of $ 1,885.00.²³ Less than three months later, Byron
moved forward with a plan to reach his goal: “M.T.C. I put
signs up ‘Horses for sale.’ I am trying to get a good price & put
money [for] microfilms. The Lord will help me.”²⁴ This journal
entry illuminates Byron’s tenacity as well as his consecrated ef-
fort to assist the Icelandic people whom he dearly loved.
As the time for their second mission drew near, the Geslisons increased their efforts to prepare. On April 12, 1983, Byron noted, “We have placed [the] Articles of Faith in Icelandic on the mirror & are reading the gospels in Icelandic.”²⁵ Less than two weeks later Byron, Melva, and their twin sons had a family portrait taken intended for display in the visitors’ center that would be erected in Iceland. Byron mentioned in his journal the willingness of the twins to part with something dear: “Dave & Dan sacrificed & shaved off mustache[s] . . . for it.”²⁶

During the spring of 1983, the Geslisons taught a weekly Icelandic course out of their home.²⁷ On May 17, their much-anticipated date of departure finally arrived. Brother Millet informed them that they would be departing on the July 18.²⁸ At the end of June, Byron and Melva went to Church headquarters in Salt Lake City to receive instruction from general Church leaders. Byron faithfully recorded the counsel they received:

On Thursday June 30th we went to see Elder Robert D. Hales. He sent a letter to us telling us to come in & see him. He also sent a letter from Pres. Benson authorizing me to give Patriarchal blessings. . . . When we went to Elder Hales’ office, his secretary told us that Elder David Haight wanted to talk with us. We were elated. . . . He [Elder Haight] asked us if he could come visit us in Iceland. We told him we & the saints there would be most delighted. . . .

Elder Hales came & spent more than an hour with us going over many things pertaining to our call & the conditions in Iceland & how & what he wanted us to do. He took all the time needed & was most gracious & most helpful. He showed sincere interest & caring in us & the Icelandic work & people. . . . He said he wanted to stay close to me regarding
Iceland for the next several years, pertaining to leadership, that we were on the verge of being able to expand the work when Gunnar & Pall were killed & now things are [were] such that in some ways we have to start over. . . . He said I was to go there & lead; that the Branch had been hit badly by it all. He said he’d like to see a Book of Mormon in every home. This will take some doing. He told mom to teach the Keflavik saints to keep their homes neat & clean & become better home makers. He said Reykjavik Branch needed to be strengthened.²⁹

Geslison later recalled: “Before leaving the United States, we met with Elder David B. Haight and discussed his visit in September, at which time we would dedicate a building that was purchased in 1980 and was being renovated. Our first task in Iceland was to complete the renovation begun by Brother Jackson and Brother Smith.”³⁰ Elder Robert D. Hales, also a Church General Authority, stressed two other items. Geslison remembered, “Elder Hales asked us to make an effort to get the Book of Mormon into every home in Iceland. . . . Elder Hales also requested us to make arrangements with the Icelandic authorities to have the church in Iceland formally recognized.”³¹

Shortly after their arrival in late July, the Geslisons set out with determined focus to accomplish the mission with which they had been charged. By September 17, the multipurpose church building was completed in time for Elder Haight, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to dedicate it. Haight was impressed not only with the cleanliness of the building but also with the excellent usage of the available space. Byron described the building thus:

The building contains an excellent, though small, visitor’s center, a film room, a baptistry, and a distribution center.
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on the basement floor. The second floor has translation, District, and Branch offices. The third floor has been built into a chapel, class rooms and Branch genealogical library. This Branch library contains four reading machines and the church produced Icelandic microfilms and [microfiche]. The facility is being used by members and non-members alike.32

Formal Recognition for the LDS Church

Just six weeks later, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally recognized in Iceland. Geslison had been working on recognition prior to the conclusion of his first mission in 1977. On August 4, 1983, Byron began again to fill out the paper work necessary for the request with Baldur Möller, who was then serving in the Ministry of Religion and Justice. “Mr. Moller had told President Gislon when he had requested recognition the last time in 1977 that when the Church had a permanent building and when we had at least 50 members and when the Branch was operated by Icelandic citizens then we could come back and request recognition. He said that they wanted to be sure that we were not fly-by-night.” Further, “Mr. Moller assured President Gislason that there would be no problem having everything in order to have the Church recognized on November 1st during the visit of a General Authority of the Church and the European Area President.”33

The official LDS Church district records in Reykjavík provide the following notation: “On November 1st, 1983 Elder Hales and President [Geslison] went at the appointed time to the Ministry of Religion and Justice. . . . All preliminary work had been taken care of and the signing and official action took
place. It was good to have a General Authority present for this important event in the history of the Church in Iceland.\textsuperscript{34}

Geslison explained the advantage of having such recognition by the Icelandic government: “This gives the church many advantages. We can perform blessings, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and conduct funerals and have them honored and recorded by the Icelandic government. It is now also illegal for scurrilous articles to be written about the church or for anyone to speak evil of it. This was a great step for the church in Iceland.”\textsuperscript{35} As the new year dawned, Ólafur Einarsson and Björg Marteinsdóttir took advantage of this official recognition by allowing the president of their Reykjavík Branch,

Fred E. Woods with members of the Einarsson family. Right to left: Brynjólfur Viðir Ólafsson, Unnur Erna Ólafsdóttir, Ólafur Einarsson, Björg Marteinsdóttir, and Matthias Orri Ólafsson, 2004. \textit{Courtesy of Fred E. Woods}
Visitors’ Center Tours

Another phase in bringing the LDS Church out of obscurity in Iceland was offering tours of the newly completed visitors’ center. Melva Geslison played the primary role in this assignment, explaining the various displays to many guests who visited during this time. When the visitors entered the building, they were greeted with the Church logo. Melva would repeat this statement in Icelandic to provide a Christian orientation: “Most people know us by our nickname, the Mormons, but . . . the real name of our Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Jesus Christ is the central figure of our religion. Everything we do in the Church is done because of our belief in Jesus Christ and our desire to follow his teachings.”

The guests were then ushered through exhibits which included a map of Iceland, portraits of the first LDS missionaries to Iceland and the early Icelandic settlers of Spanish Fork. Melva provided dialogue for each of these images, which included a discussion of the 1938 establishment of an Icelandic monument in Spanish Fork and the 1955 centennial celebration of Icelanders arriving in Utah. She then told her guests about the closure of missionary work in Iceland in 1914 and the reemergence of the work in 1975 when she, Byron, and her twin sons reopened the mission. Melva also mentioned the dedication of the land for the preaching of the restored gospel in 1977 and concluded with a testimony of Jesus Christ while visitors viewed an image of the Savior’s Second Coming. Her efforts significantly contributed to a better public image of the LDS Church in Iceland and helped to generate a spirit of goodwill.
During this period (1983–84) the district held dances, open houses, talent shows, and even commemorated a “District Pioneer Day,” which helped to unite the Saints in both the Keflavík and Reykjavík branches.³⁹ The district was also blessed with the arrival of Elder and Sister Arthur W. Hansen, who returned to serve their second mission in Iceland on February 28, 1984. Six months later, they reopened missionary work in Akureyri with Elders Dale Tanner and Steven Andersen. Just before Christmas 1984, Melva and Byron Geslison concluded their second mission to Iceland and returned to Spanish Fork, Utah.⁴⁰

A Valiant Effort Recognized

At the dawn of 1985, Svend H. P. Svendsen was serving as the president of the Denmark Copenhagen Mission and therefore presided over the Iceland District. The district president was Austin Guðmundur Loveless. At this same time, Guðmundur Sigurðsson was serving as the president of the Reykjavík Branch and Michael R. Strode as president of the Keflavík Branch. A midyear tabulation of records revealed noted there were 104 members in the Reykjavík Branch and about sixty members in the military branch of Keflavík.⁴¹

The following year, this small branch of Icelanders proved their determination when they were informed that they could not publish the Church magazine Vonarstjarnan unless six hundred subscriptions were sold. With children as half of their congregation, the Icelandic Saints had to sell a minimum of 550 subscriptions. An article titled “Non-LDS Buy Magazine,” Church News, May 25, 1986, reported, “Within two months, Icelandic members and 10 missionaries stationed there sold more than 700 subscriptions.”⁴²
In the summer of 1987, the Icelandic Saints were renewed by the arrival of Byron and Melva Geslison. Inasmuch as Melva had ancestry in the British Isles, the Geslisons filled out mission papers stipulating their preference in going to England. However, when the paperwork was reviewed by Church authorities, the Geslisons received a phone call from Elder Robert D. Hales indicating that they were again needed in Iceland.⁴³

**A Third Mission to Iceland**

Byron and Melva once again returned to Iceland for their third mission commencing on July 22. The following day Byron was sustained as a counselor to Dee V. Jacobs, who was then presiding over the Denmark Copenhagen Mission. During this same month the Saints living in the Akureyri region were strengthened by a visit from President Dee V. Jacobs and his wife. They became acquainted with the ten members who were then meeting in a building previously owned by the Seventh-Day Adventists. Their membership grew to fourteen members with the arrival of the family of Gerhard Ólafur Guðnason.⁴⁴

**Akureyri Branch Organized**

A few months later, the Saints of this region had something to celebrate. On November 1, 1987, exactly four years from the time the LDS Church was officially recognized in Iceland, Akureyri became a branch, the second Icelandic branch in Iceland. Gerhard Ólafur Guðnason, was sustained as president. “Tears were falling—tears of joy—in the audience as one after another expressed feelings of satisfaction and joy at the event.”⁴⁵

The following month was also a time of rejoicing. On the day after Christmas, the Akureyri Saints gleaned their first
baptism. The district records explained, “This became an exciting time for the members of the Akureyri Branch and for the entire Icelandic District and the Mission. President and Sister Byron T. Gislason and President Gudmundur Sigurdsson drove to Akureyri to attend the services.”

Missionaries and priesthood leaders launched 1988 by setting goals for the year, deciding they would strive for forty-eight baptisms by the end of December. This would amount to one baptism per month in each missionary companionship, in other words, twenty-four baptisms for the Reykjavík region as well as twelve in Keflavík and a dozen in Akureyri. It was further agreed that great emphasis would be given to distributing copies of the Book of Mormon.

By February, all the Church members in Iceland were called to serve a three-month mission to meet these goals. During this month, letters were sent seeking approval for the debut of a radio program and to use the broadcast *Music and the Spoken Word*. By the end of March the first radio broadcast program was introduced. Station “ROT” agreed to present the broadcast without charge. In addition, plans also commenced for an August 1989 temple excursion.

*Family Reunion Organized in Iceland*

In June, Byron and Melva Geslison hosted a family reunion, bringing both sides of his Icelandic family together. Letters had been sent the previous fall, including an invitation for each person to gather what they could from their genealogical records. The Geslisons were assisted by local Icelanders in preparations. The event proved most successful; 132 family members attended the reunion. “It was felt that much goodwill was engendered through it and that was the purpose.”
About this same time, two other missionaries, Don and Mary Dilworth, concluded their mission by inviting 150 of Sister Dilworth's Icelandic relatives to a family reunion. They too found success in sharing “Church films, genealogy displays, dinner . . . [which] were enjoyed by 108 people, including 85 nonmembers. The event was held in a local school house and was among the largest Church-sponsored gatherings of nonmembers in recent history.”

The summer of 1988 ended on a high note when the Icelandic Saints watched for the first time the proceedings of the biannual LDS Church General Conference with Icelandic text. Before the year closed, the district Relief Society held their annual meeting under the direction of Sister Klara Gunnarsdóttir, and Jens Kristofferson of seminaries and institutes met with local seminary teachers and their students.

Many changes occurred as the new year dawned. On January 19, 1989, Byron and Melva Geslison completed their third mission to Iceland. The Icelandic District records for this date state, “There are no words that adequately express the appreciation of all for the faithful labors of this family. They have been pioneers in every sense [sense] of the word and have laid foundations and spurred the progress of the modern day restored Church in Iceland.”

An Honor Well Deserved

In 1993, Byron was crowned with Iceland’s highest honor, “The Order of the Falcon,” when the honorable Tómas Tómasson, ambassador of Iceland, presented the award to Geslison. Tómasson told the assembled Spanish Fork audience that the award was conferred on both Icelandic and foreign subjects “who above all others have furthered the welfare and honor of the Fatherland or have accomplished achievements in the
interest of mankind.” The ambassador added that Vigdís Finnboágadóttir, president of Iceland, had commissioned him to bestow the honor upon Mr. Geslison, “one of the outstanding western Icelanders.” Tómasson further stated, “I want to tell you that the great missionary work that Byron has done—both as a missionary from Utah in Iceland and as a missionary of Iceland in Utah—has been highly valued by the authorities in Iceland.” The ambassador concluded, “We value highly both the fostering of family bonds, and also the promoting of the Icelandic culture and heritage here in Utah and the western Icelandic identity here.”

Byron T. Geslison receiving the Order of the Falcon from Tómas Tómasson, the ambassador of Iceland, 1993. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
Fire on Ice

After their return to Utah, the Geslisons helped orient Joseph and Alene Felix, who had been assigned to replace them. By late spring the Felixes journeyed to the northern region of Iceland in order to strengthen the members in the cities of Dalvík and Akureyri. On June 15, the new missionary couple and ten other missionaries took a ferry to the Westmann Islands in order to proselytize for three days. About this same time, President and Sister Jacobs flew to Greenland to strengthen local members who had no contact with the Church.⁵⁴

A highlight of the year occurred when Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles visited the Icelandic District Conference on October 14–15, 1989. Newly called President Greer (who replaced President Jacobs) and his wife visited with Elder Nelson, and a missionary conference was held.⁵⁵ During Elder Nelson’s remarks at the conference, he invoked an apostolic blessing on the land of Iceland, requesting that it would become “a lighthouse to all of Europe.”⁵⁶

Challenges and Blessings

As in previous decades, the 1990s were full of challenges for the Icelandic Saints. Church News reporter Todd Harris pointed out, “One of the major challenges is physical isolation. This affects the members in a number of ways. First, the leaders of the branch regret the lack of other branches or wards close by on whom they can rely as examples. Secondly, the isolation Icelandic members must endure makes temple attendance difficult.”⁵⁷ Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir, who has made the temple trip at least annually, told Harris, “When I recognized the truth of the gospel, I was at first afraid to accept it because of what I knew it would require of me. . . . But
I couldn’t turn my back on it, and it has become the greatest blessing of my life.”

A great blessing occurred for Sveinbjörg on a June 1991 trip to Salt Lake City to work on the translation of the temple ceremony into Icelandic. She was assisted by the district president, Guðmundur Sigurðsson, who was also joined by his wife, Valgerður (“Valla”) Knútsdóttir, and their daughter, Rebekka Rán Guðmundsdóttir. Even prior to this experience, these adults had been influential in strengthening the LDS Icelandic youth.

Harris reported that family home evening programs in the home of Sveinbjörg had played a significant role in the lives of these youth in the late twentieth century:
Fire on Ice

Many young adults also joined the Church during this period, among them two of Sveinbjorg’s sons, Vidir and Hlynur Oskarsson. Sveinbjorg’s home soon became an informal meeting place for these new young members and their friends who were interested in the Church. Eventually these gatherings were formalized somewhat, and for almost six years Sveinbjorg held family home evenings at her house for anybody who wanted to come. At times as many as 60 young people attended these meetings, many of whom eventually joined the Church. The effectiveness of these family home evenings, and the strength of the resultant conversions of those attending is evidenced by the number of these young people who are still active today, and have themselves become the leaders of the Church in Iceland.⁶⁰

One young man who benefited from Sveinbjörg’s tutelage was Ólafur Einarsson, who joined the Church in December 1982. In 1988 he was called as the president of the Reykjavik Branch and later served as the district president from 1994 to 2003.⁶¹ He was replaced by his son-in-law, Kristján Mathiesen, a fellow Icelander who had served in the England Bristol Mission (1991–93) and also as the president of the Reykjavik Branch.⁶²

The Strength of LDS Youth in Iceland

In 1994 one writer assessed: “The youth continue to be a source of strength and inspiration in the branch today. . . . Thorbergur Sigurjonsson, who just turned 19, is currently the Sunday School president and a district missionary; and the branch has sent out two more missionaries, Elder Fridrik Gudmundsson to England, and Sister Steinunn Pieper to Scotland.”⁶³ The reporter further noted, “There is also an ac-
tive seminary program, attended by most of the youth in the branch.”

Both Sveinbjörg and Valla donated their time for a number of years to strengthening the youth as teachers in the seminary program. In the photos appearing in an issue of Church News (1994), Valla is pictured with several of her students on a seminary field trip. Such excursions certainly required sacrifice amid an active life of raising five children of her own, and her husband, Guðmundur, has served in Iceland as a faithful Church leader for many years. In an article appearing in 1995, one author wrote:

Because of Iceland’s high cost of living (nearly all goods except potatoes, fish, and dairy products are imported), many Icelanders work two jobs or long hours at one job. Guðmundur Sigurdsson, former district president, does both. In his truck, he makes commercial deliveries all over the island; he also raises and sells Icelandic ponies, keeping alive an ancient Viking tradition. He and his wife, Valgerdur Knutsdottir, are also busy rearing their five children.

An LDS Chapel in Iceland at Last

Such sacrifices certainly paid off as evidenced by the fact that as the decade of the 1990s concluded, a special groundbreaking ceremony took place on Icelandic soil, March 6, 1999:

About 75 members of this northern nation’s two branches gathered recently for the groundbreaking of the first meetinghouse to be constructed by the Church in Iceland. . . . The building site is on a hill overlooking the sea in the Reykjavík suburb Garoabaer [Garðabaer]. Presiding at the March 6
groundbreaking was Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr of the Seventy and counselor in the Europe North Area presidency. In his remarks and dedicatory prayer, he praised the members for their faith and patience.⁶⁷

To the great joy of the Icelandic Saints, on July 4, 2000, Elder Kerr returned to Iceland to dedicate their first chapel, nearly one hundred and fifty years since the first missionaries brought the restored gospel to the Icelanders. Two years later, jubilation again filled the hearts of the Saints when Church President Gordon B. Hinckley visited Reykjavík on September 11, 2002, a landmark event. Never before had a Church president visited the Icelandic Saints in their homeland. In the *Church News*, R. Scott Lloyd reported:

For some members, seeing the president of the Church was the fulfillment of a dream, the district president [Kristján Mathiesen] said. “One of our members has been a faithful member since 1976, when the branch was first organized. When we announced that President Hinckley was coming, she just started crying.” The district president said he has a hard time talking about the visit without crying. He said the experiences at the airport as local Church leaders and their spouses welcomed President Hinckley was overwhelming. “It’s a small airport and we could feel the blast of the jet engines as the aircraft landed. It was also a huge spiritual blast as it hit us that the prophet was here. No Church president has ever come here before. It was an amazing experience.”⁶⁸

Lloyd also noted that before he addressed a congregation of Icelandic Saints, President Hinckley “paid a call on the president of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grimsson. . . . ‘They had a good chat,’ President Mathiesen said. ‘They talked about the Iceland association in Utah, about the Church in Iceland, and about
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Elder Wm. Rolfe Kerr, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, and President Ólafur Einarsson at the dedication of the first Latter-day Saint Icelandic chapel on July 4, 2000. Courtesy of David A. Ashby

Kristján Geir Mathiesen, district president of Iceland, and his wife, Soley Renee Mathiesen. Courtesy of Fred E. Woods
President Gordon B. Hinckley, the first Latter-day Saint prophet to step foot on Iceland, and his wife, Marjorie Pay Hinckley, stands with some of the Saints of Iceland in Reykjavík, 2002. Courtesy of David A. Ashby

the events of Sept. 11, 2001. The Iceland president seemed reluctant to let President Hinckley go.⁶⁹

In his fall 2002 address to more than 220 Saints gathered in the only LDS chapel in Iceland,⁷⁰ President Hinckley stressed that “the strength of the Church is found in the strengths of its families.” He challenged Church members to keep the commandments so that they would be worthy of being sealed as a family unit for all eternity in Latter-day Saint temples. The Church President also reminded the Icelandic members that
they “were the descendants of Vikings—people of ‘strength and power and capacity’ to do great things.”⁷¹

Nearly two years later, Björg Marteinsdóttir, who had recently returned with her husband from the May 2004 dedication of the Copenhagen Denmark Temple, remarked with much optimism that “the Church is moving forward, and although we feel isolated here at times, I think the Lord has shown how much He loves us and that He knows about us. . . . We have the prophet coming to check on us, and we have this temple now. And we’re having more and more . . . missionaries coming . . . that are of Icelandic descent. So you know, we aren’t forgotten.”⁷²

President Gordon B. Hinckley, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and President Ólafur Ragnar Grimsson, president of Iceland, outside President Grimsson’s home at Bessastadir, 2002. Courtesy of David A. Ashby
Notes


2. In a document titled “Scope Statement: Scripture Update Project Icelandic,” Reykjavík Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, a note states that the Book of Mormon was prepared for translation during the period of 1977 through May of 1981, being published June 2, 1981. “It was translated by Halldor Hansen a pediatrician in Iceland and by Sveinbjorg Gudmundsdottir the Translation Supervisor of the Church in Iceland. They also did the doctrinal reviewing of each other’s work. The linquisitic review was done by Jon Fridjonsson, a professor in Icelandic at the University of Iceland.” In a May 31, 2004, oral interview conducted by the author with Sveinbjorg, she stated, “I assigned him [Halldor Hansen] to translate Alma . . . and I did the rest. And that’s how we did it. And then he would read my work and I would read his and compare and discuss. And after that . . . to [the] university to scholars to review. And I didn’t tell them the true translators.” In an article titled “Scripture Translations Steady,” *Church News*, November 6, 1982, 3, the writer points out that following Sveinbjorg’s successful translation of the Book of Mormon she also translated other Latter-day scripture: the Doctrine and Covenants as well as the Pearl of Great Price. When Sveinbjorg finished her translation of all the LDS scriptures, she sent a final letter to Lowell D. Bishop, supervisor of emerging languages, simply stating, “The sun in [is] shining in Iceland.”


5. President Vigdis, as she was known, was the fourth president of Iceland and the first woman in the world to ever be elected as a constitutional head of state. She served as president of Iceland from 1980 to 1996. See www.womenworldleaders.org.

7. “Reykjavík Branch Presidents,” Reykjavík Branch Records, evidences that Páll began his service on June 26, 1982, replacing Gunnar Óskarsson who had been baptized August 30, 1980, and had been serving as the president of the branch since November 23, 1980. Ironically, just three weeks before his death, Páll had written a note dated December 9, 1982 (Reykjavík Branch Records), which stated, “I am happy to stop working this new year and I am not worried about what may come. God will see to it that time will be well spent if I don’t get a job right away.”


11. Journal of Byron T. Geslison (October 1, 1982–July 19, 1983), January 5, 1983. In an entry recorded two days later, Byron also mentions that he had heard that the Reykjavík Branch “hadn’t ceased crying.” This entry also reveals that Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir had called him and supplied the details of how the accident occurred. In a report written at the close of his second mission, Byron remembered that “this unhappy event threw the branch members into shock and caused them to become bewildered and some to falter” (see Byron T. Geslison, “Supplemental Mission Report of Iceland Submitted February 26, 1985,” 1–2). The word *supplemental* is here used inasmuch as Byron had submitted an earlier report of the first mission he and his wife served (1975–77) in December of 1977. This supplemental report would be a summation of his experience of presiding over the affairs of missionary work in Iceland during his second mission.
15. Journal of Byron T. Geslison (October 1, 1982–July 19, 1983), January 21, 1983. Ironically, on this same day Byron and Melva received a letter from Þorsteinn Jónsson, who, along with David and his brother Dan, had helped reopen missionary work in Iceland in 1975.
25. Journal of Byron T. Geslison, April 12, 1983. The Articles of Faith referred to are thirteen statements made by LDS Church founder, Joseph Smith Jr., to the editor of the Chicago Democrat in 1842. They were later canonized in LDS scripture.
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28. Journal of Byron T. Geslison (October 1, 1982–July 19, 1983), May 17, 1983. Byron further notes that on July 17, 1983, he and Melva were set apart (authorized and blessed) for their mission by President Barney. He also mentions in his journal for this date, “We have had many people come & also stop us & talk & congratulate us. . . . Financially we were helped just short of $1,000.00.”


36. Icelandic District Records, 1983–84, 1. “Reykjavík Branch Presidents,” Reykjavík Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, notes that Guðmundur Sigurðsson served as the branch president of this branch from May 20, 1983, to August 3, 1986, when he was replaced by Ólafur Ólafsson. Ólafsson would be replaced on March 6, 1988, by Ólafur Einarsson for whom Sigurðsson had performed the marriage. Icelandic District Records, 1983, 1, further indicates that “One of the important events of this period was the Temple marriage of Johann Zakarís Karlsson and Thorstina Loley Olafsdottir. This is the first time in the history of the Church in Iceland since ’75 that this has happened.”

37. “Iceland Information Center Guide Dialogue,” in author’s possession. Gratitude is expressed to Daniel Geslison for bringing this document to the attention of the author and for graciously
allowing him to make a copy of it. See also the Journal of Byron T. Geslison (October 1, 1982–July 19, 1983), February 12, 1983, for a discussion of the planning for these displays.

38. Although much good was accomplished, one unfortunate incident occurred in mid-October 1984. Icelandic District Records, 1984, 3, notes, “On October 16th a woman entered the building on Skolavordustig and became violent and began to damage displays in the Visitor’s Center. It was necessary to remove her bodily from the building.”

39. For example, Icelandic District Records, 1983, 2, notes, “District Pioneer Day was celebrated July 23 with many attending.” Icelandic District Records, 1983, 4, further records, “October 28 a Talent Show for both Branches was held in Keflavik. This proved a great success.” Icelandic District Records, 1983–84, 1, adds, “Plans were made to hold an Open House to be open for public viewing from December 23 to January 3rd. It was not well attended because of bad weather and business of the people during the 26 days of Christmas which the Icelandic people celebrate.”


42. “Non-LDS Buy Magazine,” Church News, May 25, 1986, 11. According to Todd Harris, “Gospel Touches Remote Iceland,” Church News, August 6, 1994, 12, following her successful translation of the Book of Mormon and other Latter-day scripture, Sveinbjörg Guðmundsdóttir translated many of the materials needed to run the programs of the Church such as handbooks, class manuals, and seminary materials. However, Sveinbjörg paid particular attention to the translation of the Icelandic edition of the Church magazine called Vonarstjarnan, or ‘The Star of Hope.’”

43. Phone conversation with Melva Geslison, June 13, 2005.

48. “History of the Church in Iceland,” Icelandic District Records, 1988, 3. Just three months later, this account reports that Byron and Melva held another family reunion in Skeiðflöt and again found success with 75 gathering for the event.
50. “History of the Church in Iceland,” Icelandic District Records, 1988, 4, 6, notes that the Saints met to listen to a taped version of the April 1988 general conference on August 14, 1988. The district Relief Society annual meeting was held November 26, and the visit of Jens Kristofferson occurred on December 19.
52. On September 11, 1992, Byron had the Order of the Falcon bestowed upon him in Reykjavík. According to David A. Ashby, “The Icelandic Settlement in Utah,” unpublished paper written in 2003, in author’s possession, 11, two other Spanish Fork Icelanders were recipients of this esteemed honor. Kate B. Carter and John Y. Bearnson received the Order of the Falcon in 1955.
56. Letter by the Iceland District Presidency, Icelandic District Records, no date (probably the end of 1989).


59. Icelandic District Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, 1991, June 6, 1991, notes that this translation project was begun on June 6 and completed by July 2. Fridrik Rafn Gudmundsson informed the author that three years later, these same three adults, along with several others, returned to Salt Lake City in order to help with recordings for the temple endowment.


61. In an interview with Ólafur Einarsson by Fred E. Woods, Olafur told the author that he was baptized December 15, 1982. The “Reykjavík Branch Presidents,” Reykjavík Branch Records, Reykjavík, Iceland, note that Ólafur Einarsson replaced Ólafur Ólafsson as branch president on March 6, 1988. In a June 6, 2005, telephone conversation with Friðrik Rafn Guðmundsson, Friðrik informed the author that Ólafur Einarsson served as district president from 1994 to 2003.


63. It has been my privilege to have Friðrik Rafn Guðmundsson as the translator of this book. In 2000 I first met Steinunn Piper, who was then attending Brigham Young University after her mission. However, Steinunn Piper was not Iceland’s first female missionary. This honor goes to Þórstína Ólafsdóttir, who became Iceland’s first sister missionary when she left her native homeland to serve a welfare services mission in the Canada Winnipeg Mission, April 1981 (see Flint J. Stephens, “Fire and Ice,” *New Era*, December 1981, 20).

64. Harris, “Gospel Touches Remote Iceland,” 12.


CHAPTER 7: THE CHURCH IN ICELAND TODAY

70. 2005 Church Almanac (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 2004), notes that in 2002 there were 273 Church members in Iceland.
The Icelanders of Utah have remembered their roots in several ways. Visual reminders of loved ones as well as images of the fatherland decorated their homes. A continual exchange of letters has crossed the ocean to remind both countries of their common ancestry. No doubt the Westmann Islands and Reykjavík were mentioned in the streets of Spanish Fork, while native Icelanders spoke of friends and loved ones who had immigrated to Utah. Steady efforts were made by the transplanted Icelanders to maintain their native customs and traditions. Kate Bjarnson Carter wrote, “The Iceland people in Utah are said to have preserved folklore and...
customs of their mother country more than any other nationality who pioneered Utah.”¹

“Iceland Days”

“Iceland Days” were established to retain the rich heritage of the Latter-day Saint Icelanders in Utah.² This annual festivity commenced in 1897 and was organized under the capable leadership and direction of Einar H. Johnson, who formed a committee to make plans for commemorating Iceland’s settlement in 874.³

In describing the first “Iceland Days” celebration held August 3, 1897, La Nora Allred wrote, “Poles and willows along the river in the bottoms were gathered, and a bowery was built on the north side of the amusement hall. The entire program was in Icelandic: Speeches were given. . . . Vocal

JoAnna Woods, an honorary Icelander, demonstrates the craft of spinning wool as part of the activities of “Iceland Days.” Courtesy of David A. Ashby
solos were sung. . . . The Icelandic choir also sang several numbers. . . . There was also a grand ball in the evening.”

Byron T. Geslison points out that elements of this general commemorative plan continued to be practiced early each August during the twentieth century, though the location for the event sometimes changed:

In the beginning they prepared boweries in which to hold the observance. They also had winter programs and committee meetings to prepare for the main summer event. Icelandic Day has been held in many different locations over the years. Some of the early ones were held in the diversion dam up Spanish Fork Canyon. Many of the participants fondly remembered the “dam parties,” as they were called then. Another favorite site was Castella Resort also up Spanish Fork Canyon. They would ride up in hay wagons, live in tents, swim in the outdoor and indoor swimming pools, and play baseball and other sports. Subsequently, Icelandic Day has been held in other Utah Valley locations including Geneva Resort, Park Roshe, Arrowhead and Canyonview Park, and most recently, the Spanish Fork City Park.

Joseph Walker describes the celebrations: “For generations, descendants of those early immigrants have gathered in Spanish Fork on the first Saturday in August. The date coincides with an annual holiday in Vestmannaejar [Westmann Islands], an island just off the south coast of Iceland that was a haven to Icelandic Mormons.” One Icelander adds, “For years, our ancestors clung to each other. . . . They were family. In that sense, our gathering is a family reunion. It’s a way of maintaining ethnic identity and cementing ties to our Icelandic heritage.”
Such events helped to keep the Utah Icelanders united, although all did not embrace the predominant LDS faith within the borders of the state. Evidence for such unity appears in reports by members of the Icelandic Association as well as from newspaper articles that both Latter-day Saints and non-Mormons participated in the “Iceland Days” programs. For example, in 1900 the Latter-day Saint-owned newspaper the Deseret Evening News reported the involvement of the Lutheran clergy. “In the afternoon an instructive speech on the Icelanders in Vinland, by Rev. R. Runolfson, was the first number on the program. . . . Rev. A. Gunberg read a historical and geographical sketch of Iceland, which was replete with data, and graphical descriptions of that island.”

Icelandic Monument

One catalytic effort that established a permanent image for the early Icelanders was initiated during the “Iceland Days” commemoration of 1938. As August dawned, a beautiful monument was unveiled to pay tribute to the first sixteen Icelanders who immigrated to Utah. It was a replica of a lighthouse with a Viking ship model sitting on top and a plaque engraved with sixteen names. The symbol reflects
the seafaring background of the Icelanders and was erected by the Icelandic Association of Utah and the Daughters of Utah Pioneers. It lies on the East Bench of Spanish Fork located at Eighth East and Canyon Road and has become a local landmark.⁸

Two days before the dedication, the Deseret News announced that “girls representing each of the original pioneer families and dressed in native costumes will unveil the monument and Andrew Jenson, assistant Church Historian will offer the dedicatory prayer.”⁹ On Thursday, August 4, 1938, the Spanish Fork Press reported, “With several thousand visitors swelling the population of Spanish Fork, and more than a 100 persons in colorful costume . . . the Icelandic Monument commemorating [sic] the first permanent Icelandic settlement . . . was dedicated Monday evening.”¹⁰ The following day, news of the historic event had already spread to the inhabitants of Iceland. Byron T. Geslison heard of the monument dedication via an Icelandic radio station when he was visiting with his cousin in Reykjavík in August of 1938. He noted that when the announcement was made, “It caused great interest among the people of Iceland.”¹¹
Fire on Ice

The Icelandic Monument in Spanish Fork, Utah. Courtesy of David A. Ashby

Cover of Centennial Anniversary Program of the First Icelanders to Utah in 1955. Courtesy of Fred E. Woods
Not only was there keen interest in the 1938 “Iceland Days” celebration, but nearly six decades later another festive occasion beckoned attention. In the summer of 1995 Einar Benediktsson, Iceland’s ambassador to the United States, visited the “Iceland Days” activities and spoke. “He described the Icelandic people as hardy, strong and intelligent and said those traits were shared by their descendants in Utah who are professional and Church leaders. ‘What a great heritage they have,’ he said.” Joining Ambassador Benediktsson on this occasion was Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who described the ambassador as “a man of great quality and character.”¹² Such meetings certainly helped to minimize the great chasm between Utah and Iceland.

1955 Centennial Anniversary of First Icelanders to Utah

Another key event that caught the attention of Icelanders on both sides of the ocean was the centennial anniversary of the first Icelanders to Utah, held June 15–17, 1955. The keynote speaker was Elder Henry D. Moyle of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Another guest speaker, Petur Eggerz, counselor to the Legislation of Iceland at Washington DC, officially represented his native Iceland. However, the most important attendees at the celebration were some of the early Icelandic immigrants themselves. One noteworthy person in attendance was the sole living child of Samúel Bjarnasson, first male Icelandic immigrant to Utah. Bjarnasson’s daughter Mary Jane B. Nelson recalled the great effort her father put forth to succeed: “Father built a two-room adobe home on 2nd East and later built the two-story home in which I was born.” Mary Jane added, “Father was a forceful man and
a very hard worker. He was up early and late and prospered because of it.”¹³

The performance of several prominent vocalists added a further dimension to the commemoration. A cultural highlight on the occasion was a demonstration of Icelandic wrestling known as “glíma,” performed by young wrestlers from Winnipeg who had come to participate in the festivities.¹⁴ In addition, a parade was held with floats of Icelandic themes. Recently the author learned of photographic footage taken of the 1955 parade by Finnbogi Guðmundsson, who was then on a tour of Icelandic settlements in North America and had come to Utah to capture the “Iceland Days” festivities on film.¹⁵

Byron Geslison remembered: “This was a major event which attracted considerable attention, and was said to be the largest celebration Spanish Fork had had up to this time. The original Icelandic families were asked to make floats for

A float in the Spanish Fork parade, 1955. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
the parade. These graphically portrayed the old country, the trek west by the pioneers, and various subsequent events.”¹⁶ The *Spanish Fork Press* reported: “Seldom has Spanish Fork seen a celebration more enthusiastically accepted. . . . Every feature of the celebration was well attended. The pageant drew a capacity crowd with well over 1800 present. . . . Every Icelandic family assigned to build a float built one—without exception—a float their family could be proud of, and which would do credit to the whole Icelandic people.”¹⁷

*Key Events Unifying Utah and Iceland*

Another episode that brought renewed interest in the Icelandic connection was the 1975 reopening of missionary work in Iceland by the Geslison family.¹⁸ Upon their return from Iceland, the Geslison twin brothers David and Daniel participated in a five-hour film spotlighting the
Fire on Ice

drama of LDS missionaries in Iceland. The 1981 film, based on the Halldór Laxness's novel *Paradise Reclaimed*, revived interest in the topic of Iceland.¹⁹

Events occurring in Utah eventually influenced Icelandic politicians abroad. In 1989 Thor Leifson of Spanish Fork, was officially appointed the first honorary consul in the United States.²⁰ Thor’s father, Victor Leifson, had hosted Icelandic visitors to Utah until his death in 1983. Thor recounted that shortly after his father’s death, “I received a phone call from our U.S. Foreign Services in Washington D.C., and the gentlemen asked if it would be possible for me to entertain and host a dignitary from Iceland who was scheduled to come to the University of Utah.” Thor responded, “I asked the Foreign Service man how he obtained my name. . . . He was a bit evasive but mentioned he understood the Leifson family had assisted them this way before.”²¹

Thor further considered the possibility that perhaps the Icelandic government had records of several visits he had made to Iceland while traveling to Europe. In any case, this initial contact led to Thor’s hosting of other Icelandic dignitaries. Eventually Iceland’s ambassador Ingvi Ingvarsson suggested that Thor’s position become more official and that he receive the title of honorary consul of Iceland for the

Thor Leifson served as the first honorary consul to Iceland. *Courtesy of Thor Leifson*
intermountain area of the United States. Leifson explained, “For some years there had been a consular position in Denver, Colorado, but that the gentlemen there had recently passed away and Ingvi felt Salt Lake City was more central for the Inter-mountain area and therefore they would really like me to accept the assignment.”

After a warm relationship was established between Leifson and Ingvarsson, the ambassador accepted Thor’s invitation for him and his wife to visit Utah. According to Leifson, this 1990 visit was a landmark event, as “no Icelandic ambassador had ever visited here before.” The visit was tailor-made by Leifson to meet the interests of his Icelandic guests and to ensure that they saw the best of what Utah had to offer. The itinerary included a visit to several
national parks, a BYU football game, a performance by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and a meeting with members of the Church’s First Presidency.²³

The Utah visit was a great success. Leifson related, “The ambassador said he felt he related very well with the Mormon folk because they seem to have many of the same principles that Icelanders have, such as being hard working, conscientious, friendly, outgoing, highly literate and skilled workers.” Thor added, “He mentioned all these qualities that made him feel right at home here among the Mormon people.”²⁴

In 1995 Clark T. Thorstenson of Provo, Utah, followed Leifson in his duties as consul. The stewardship of the Icelandic Consul to the western United States included the western states of Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado.²⁵ During their years of service, these two Latter-day Saints hosted prominent Icelanders, including two presidents of Iceland, and arranged for the visit of several ambassadors from Iceland. Furthermore, they were successful in setting up meetings between Icelandic government officials and the First Presidency, as well as Utah governmental and congressional leaders such as Governor Michael Leavitt.

In December 1996 Consul Thorstenson extended a personal invitation to Iceland’s president, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, and his wife to visit Utah in 1997. This year marked the centennial of Spanish Fork’s “Iceland Days” as well as the sesquicentennial celebration of the Mormon pioneers entering the Salt Lake Valley. Grímsson and his wife enjoyed a weeklong July excursion that included visits with Church leaders and a Salt Lake City tour of Temple Square, the Church’s Welfare Square, and a broadcast of the Mormon
President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and his late wife, Guðrun Katrin Þorbergsdóttir, in a horse-drawn buggy at the head of the Fiesta Days parade on July 24, 1997. Courtesy of David A. Ashby

Tabernacle Choir’s *Music and the Spoken Word*. They also visited the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, where they dropped in on a class of missionaries learning Danish. The president conversed with them for several minutes in the Scandinavian language.

A special visit was also made to Spanish Fork, where President Grímsson and his wife saw evidence of its Icelandic roots. They rode in a horse-drawn buggy as they led the Fiesta Days parade as honored guests. When the parade concluded, the president visited the Spanish Fork Icelandic monument. Grímsson laid a wreath on the monument to honor the pioneer Icelanders. He and his wife then visited the Spanish Fork cemetery, where they viewed the graves of many Icelanders. Afterward, they toured historic Icelandic homes.²⁶
In a “Pioneer Heritage Fireside” in Spanish Fork, President Grímsson extended a warm invitation to his fellow Icelanders to return for a visit to their fatherland: “My journey to your beautiful state . . . is also intended as an invitation to you all to return our visit by coming home to Iceland to worship in the land of your ancestors where the magnificent creation of the earth is still going on.” He added: “The soul of the Icelanders who came to Utah had been transformed by those forces. . . . I pay tribute to those pioneers and I salute their families who for so long have been true to the Icelandic tradition.”²⁷

Several years after the impressionable Utah visit, President Grímsson, in a letter to Elder William Rolfe Kerr, a General Authority, said, “One of the most memorable events of my presidency was the visit I and my late wife Guðrún Katrín made to Utah in 1997. It was a revelation to us to discover the strong and lively Icelandic heritage that still flourishes in the State of Utah and to meet the leaders of the Church.”²⁸

Organized Tours to Iceland

In 1996 Thorstenson made arrangements for the first large organized group of Icelandic Latter-day Saint pioneer
EPILOGUE: JOINING HANDS ACROSS THE WATERS

Lil Shepherd, Guðrun Katrín Þorbergsdóttir, President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, and David A. Ashby, 1997. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*

President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson visits with President Gordon B. Hinckley and Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin on a trip to the United States in January of 2004. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
descendants to visit Iceland. The tour was led by Lil Shepherd, then president of the Icelandic Association of Utah. Simultaneously, Icelandic descendent Mark Geslison and the Brigham Young University Folk Music Ensemble presented several concerts on the Icelandic mainland and on the Westmann Islands. In the summer of 1997, Shepherd escorted another group of Western Icelanders back to their homeland. Lil and her group made dozens of contacts with native Icelandic relatives they had never met before. These tours and the BYU concerts generated positive television, radio, and newspaper reports throughout the nation.²⁹

Shortly after the tour group returned home, President Grímsson and his wife arrived in Utah, hosted by Lil Shepherd.

The monument at Westmann Island, which was dedicated on June 30, 2000. Courtesy of David A. Ashby
Arrangements were made for the Grímssons to meet Church leaders such as Elder Merrill J. Bateman, president of Brigham Young University, and Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Friendships were established, seeds were cultivated, and Icelandic soil was finally prepared for Latter-day Saints to enjoy a permanency in the land of fire and ice.

Historic Commemoration Project

Three years later, on June 30, 2000, a cluster of Icelandic Saints from Utah and Iceland met to celebrate the erection of a monument on the Westmann Islands. This monument to the emigrants includes a sculpture titled The Messenger, by Utah artist Gary Price, and presents the figure of an angel with outstretched hands to the sea, symbolizing the divine assistance these Icelandic emigrants received as they journeyed to Utah. The base of the monument also includes a biblical passage engraved in both Icelandic and English: “And I will bring you out from the people, and I will gather you out of the countries, wherein you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm” (Ezekiel 34:20). In addition, below this passage of scripture is a list of the names of 410 Icelanders who left their homeland for Utah between 1854 and 1914, about half of which were from the Westmann Islands.³⁰

Those who were in attendance for this special occasion included not only friends and family of Icelanders who had immigrated to Utah but also Icelandic government officials and LDS Church leaders, Ólafur Einarsson, district president of the Church in Iceland, and Elder Kerr, then serving in the North European Area Presidency. Before dedicating the
monument, Elder Kerr thanked the citizens of the Westmann Islands for their support in allowing the monument to be erected and also Church members who assisted with this project. He made special note of Spanish Fork citizen and Iceland’s honorary vice consul J. Brent Haymond, whom he thanked “for his tireless efforts in seeing the project through to completion.” Kerr further complimented Haymond, stating, “Brent’s gene pool does not accommodate the word ‘no’.”

Just three days later (July 3, 2000), President Grímsson and a number of Icelandic Saints from Utah and Reykjavík gathered for the opening of a museum exhibit at the Icelandic Emigration Center in Hofsós, Iceland. This project had its origin with President Grímsson’s 1997 visit
Aerial photograph of Hofsós. The white arrow designates the location of the Icelandic Emigration Center. *Courtesy of Valgeir Thorvaldsson*

David A. Ashby, David Oddsson, Almar Grímsson, and Valgeir Thorvaldsson, at the reopening of “The Road to Zion” exhibit in the Culture House in Reykjavík, Iceland, on May 7, 2005. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
The *Christus*, by the famed Icelandic and Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768–1844), which is part of “The Road to Zion” exhibit being displayed at the Culture House in Reykjavik until 2007. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
to Utah. Through this initial contact, a relationship began to develop between Valgeir Thorvaldsson, director of the Icelandic Emigration Center, and members of the Icelandic Association of Utah. This exhibit, titled “The Road to Zion,” featured a story of the Icelanders who gathered to Utah (mostly Spanish Fork) between 1854 and 1914. It included information about the first missionaries to Iceland, the journey by land and sea to Utah, as well as the immigrants’ assimilation experience in a new country. The exhibit also included a statue of Jesus Christ. This statue is a smaller replica of a famous sculpture known as the Christus by Scandinavian sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1768–1844), whose mother was Icelandic.³²

The Icelandic Association of Utah rallied heroically to support these historic projects.³³ Throughout the undertakings, David A. Ashby, president of the Icelandic Association, and vice consul J. Brent Haymond spearheaded efforts to move plans forward in a timely manner.³⁴ Bliss Anderson, whom Ashby referred to as “our most active genealogist” in the Icelandic Association, labored diligently to provide names of the Icelanders who gathered to Utah, which were displayed on a “Wall of Honor” as part of the museum.
Since then, Bliss has continued to serve as a volunteer in the Spanish Fork Family History Center to help Utah citizens get connected with their Icelandic roots.

The Icelandic Connection in the Twenty-first Century

As the twenty-first century has commenced, a great relationship between Utah and Iceland continues. In the early spring of 2001, Iceland’s ambassador to the United States and Canada, Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson, and his wife, Bryndís Scram, visited Spanish Fork at the invitation of Brent Haymond. During the visit the ambassador was touched by a book compiled by Blaine Ashby and Bliss Anderson containing more than five hundred pages of his genealogy.

Later the ambassador wrote to Anderson, stating: “I shall cherish this royal present for as long as I live. . . . It is a treasure. . . . When the family gets together, this proud treasure is the focus of everyone’s attention.”

A year later, Ambassador Hannibalsson returned to Utah for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. During his visit, a reception was held for Icelandic athletes and dignitaries at the Springville Museum of Art near Spanish Fork. Spanish Fork Icelander Lil Shepherd and other organizers were expecting approximately two to three hundred visitors, but instead received over seven hundred. The tremendous support once again impressed the ambassador and thrilled the athletes.

A Sesquicentennial Commemoration

In 2005 the Icelandic Association of Utah undertook a special project: a sesquicentennial commemoration of the first Icelanders to immigrate to Spanish Fork. The celebration
President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and Fred E. Woods discuss plans for the 2005 sesquicentennial event in Spanish Fork, Utah, 2004. Courtesy of Fred E. Woods


The monument in Spanish Fork, Utah, is similar to the monument at the Westmann Islands and lists the 410 Icelanders who made their way to Utah between 1854 and 1914. Courtesy of Derek J. Tangren, Mormon Historic Sites Foundation
was a remarkable success, lasting several days (Thursday through Sunday, June 23–26) and utilizing poetry, dance, and song throughout the events. One particular highlight was the unique music of the Icelandic Festival Choir, which stirred the hearts of listeners with several inspiring numbers. All forty-five members of the choir financed their own travel in order to give tribute to the Icelanders of Utah. As usual, music was the magic that overcame language barriers in conveying mutual affection and obliterated any obstacles of misunderstanding that may have existed.

Those attending the Friday night Spanish Fork gala were impressed by the heartfelt remarks delivered by President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson. He publicly admitted that initially Icelanders felt enmity towards the early Mormons because their conversion represented the first religious rebellion in eight hundred years. Their migration was also resented because they left at a precarious time when Icelanders were fighting the Danes for national independence. President Grímsson explained that due to the sincere efforts initiated by Utah Icelanders to reconnect with their homeland and to keep their cultural heritage vibrant, reconciliation had melted the icy feelings of the past and that goodwill presently flourishes. He said: “You have given us a pride in this joint heritage we share. . . . We hope we will enjoy your friendship forever.”

President Grímsson addressed a large assembly the following day at the dedication services held at the Icelandic Memorial in Spanish Fork. In his remarks he petitioned the audience to reflect upon the faith of the poor Icelandic farmers and fishermen who left their homes for a new country, and to consider the great legacy they have subsequently left in Spanish Fork. He graciously thanked the Icelandic Association of Utah, the LDS Church, and most especially
President Gordon B. Hinckley for supporting the Icelandic people. Grímsson concluded with telling the audience that the new Icelandic monument containing the names of 410 Icelandic immigrants (1855–1914), along with the monument on the Westmann Islands, “reminds us that we share the same heritage. We are one family in spirit, in faith, in heritage and in vision.”

Following these beautiful sentiments by President Grímsson, President Hinckley was invited to speak before dedicating the additions to the Icelandic memorial. These new acquisitions included a large rock taken from the area used for baptisms on the Westmann Islands, two new flags representing the United States and Iceland, eight plaques detailing the early history of Latter-day Saint Icelanders and the beautiful granite monument engraved with the names of the Icelandic immigrants.³⁹ President Hinckley pointed out that President Grímsson had bestowed a great honor upon those assembled by coming so far to pay tribute to the early Icelandic Utah pioneers. After recounting highlights of the sesquicentennial history of the Latter-day Saint Icelanders, he reminded the audience that the first Icelanders who gathered to Utah took ten months to make the journey, while he had made the same trip three years earlier in just twelve hours. He also recollected that he knew of no other LDS ethnic group who had kept their heritage in tact as well as the Icelanders had. The attendance of presidents Hinckley and Grímsson on this special sesquicentennial occasion and the uniting of their hands in friendship served to symbolize the powerful brotherhood which is presently enjoyed by Icelanders at home and abroad in Utah.

In the twenty-first century Icelandic converts, as well as all other international converts, are counseled to remain in
their homelands and to strengthen their local congregations.⁴⁰ Church members are also encouraged to be exemplary citizens in each of their respective countries.⁴¹ But the Icelandic Saints who were once asked to forsake their beloved island and to build new lives in this formerly inhospitable western desert somehow managed to bequeath devotion to loved ones left behind and a fierce loyalty to their beloved homeland of fire and ice. The posterity of these noble Atlantic pioneers continues to maintain their Icelandic identity and nurture their family ties across the great deep. Many are still active in the Icelandic Association of Utah and gather annually for “Iceland Days” and other activities. Others are involved in the Regional Family History Center at Spanish Fork and have been especially aided by the untiring dedication of

President Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson shaking hands with those who gathered for the dedication of the Icelandic monument on July 25, 2005. Courtesy of Derek J. Tangren
Fire on Ice

President Grimsson and President Hinckley standing together at the sesquicentennial commemoration. *Courtesy of Ethan Vincent*

A portion of 45 members of the Selfoss, Iceland, Choir who paid their own expense to come to Utah for the commemoration. *Courtesy of David A. Ashby*
Melva, Daniel, and David Geslison (left to right) standing at the sesquicentennial commemoration when President Hinckley asked if the Geslison family were in the crowd, 2005. Courtesy of Ethan Vincent

Michael L. Hutchings, secretary of the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation, looks on as Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, president of Iceland, and Gordon B. Hinckley, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shake hands. Courtesy of Deseret Morning News
Fire on Ice

Painting honoring the Icelandic Sesquicentennial Commemoration.

*Courtesy of the artist, Calvin Jolley*
local genealogist Bliss Anderson, who strives to connect Utah Icelanders with their roots.⁴²

At this time of reflection in this sesquicentennial year one is compelled to acknowledge that the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the land of fire and ice and the subsequent travels of its members to Zion was no small feat. Assimilation for transplanted Icelanders on American soil required suitable time for absorption. Seeds from the fatherland have germinated in this western garden, and these Utah vines have sprouted and climbed back to their homeland northward. Joyfully, the roots have welcomed the good fruit, and a spiritual grafting has been realized.

If the past is any indication of the future, many more celebrations of the rich Icelandic heritage flourishing in Spanish Fork will yet be enjoyed. Reciprocally, Icelandic commemorations will also remind native Icelanders of their friends and family in Utah, who are ever mindful of them. Finally, this inspirational story bears eloquent witness that the Great Husbandman is keenly aware of each portion of His garden and that He truly does remember those who are upon the isles of the sea.

Notes


2. David A. Ashby, “The Icelandic Settlement in Utah,” unpublished paper in the author’s possession, 10, indicates that the Icelandic Association also began to hold an annual Thorablot gathering in March 1998. Ashby explains this festive occasion: “Mid-winter is marked in the Icelandic calendar as the time of Thorri—known since the 12th century as the fourth month of the cold season. Blot
Fire on Ice

is a feast that is held many times a year. Thorrablot is held at the end of winter or the end of the coldest season in Iceland.

5. Byron T. Geslison, “The Icelandic Settlement in Utah” (adapted from a speech given to the Provo chapter of the Utah Historical Society, March 11, 1992). This unpublished article is in the author’s possession.
7. “Icelandic Memorial Day,” Deseret Evening News, August 4, 1900, 7. In an article titled “Funeral Services for Rev. R. Runolfson,” Spanish Fork Press, January 24, 1929, 1, we learn that Runolfson had immigrated to America in 1881. He also returned to Iceland to fill a pastorate for a decade (1906–16) before returning to Spanish Fork. He spent a total of thirty-five years as pastor of the Lutheran Church in Spanish Fork and died January 23, 1929, at the age of 76.
9. Whitehead, “Icelandic Converts Honored,” 2. “Icelandic Pioneers of Utah Are Honored,” Deseret News, August 2, 1938, 3, reported two days after the event that Andrew Jenson reviewed some of the early history of Iceland before offering the dedicatory prayer. In the “Journal of Andrew Jenson, 1850–1941,” Church Archives, August 1, 1938, Jenson writes: “Mon, Aug. 1. . . . Left the city by auto at 5pm. with Bertha and others and traveled to Spanish Fork where we attended a celebration honoring the arrival of the first Icelanders to Spanish Fork. I dedicated the beautiful monument erected by the local Saints and also made a speech. Clarence G. Nealen represented Gov. Blood and there was quite a lengthy program.” Appreciation is expressed to Derek J. Tangren for transcribing this entry from Jenson’s journal.
10. “Monument to Early Settlers Dedicated,” *Spanish Fork Press*, August 4, 1938, 1. On this same page, an article titled “Observe Icelandic National Holiday” reports, “With approximately 2,000 persons in attendance, most of them of Icelandic descent, the fortieth annual Icelandic National holiday to be held here was celebrated . . . at the Arrowhead Resort near Benjamin.”


15. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, *Nineteen Articles and Speeches* (Reykjavík: University of Iceland, 2003), 6, evidences that at this time Finnbogi was serving as an associate professor of Icelandic Language and Literature at the University of Manitoba. He later served as the director of the National Library of Iceland (1964–94). I thank David A. Ashby for bringing this information to my knowledge.


Fire on Ice

22. Leifson, Sagas of My Life, 58, 60.
23. Leifson, Sagas of My Life, 60.
25. Autobiographical Sketch of Clark T. Thorstenson, Icelandic Memories, vol. 1. Leifson, Sagas of My Life, 60, reveals that Thor Leifson’s consular appointment ended when he was called with his wife to serve as missionaries in the Swiss Temple.
31. “Journal of Historical Events June 30 to July 4, 2000,” 5. Another catalytic individual involved with the monument project was David A. Ashby, who was then serving as the president of the Icelandic Association of Utah.
32. “Journal of Historical Events June 30 to July 4, 2000,” 8–9. This pamphlet also indicates that Arni Pall Johannsson was in charge of the design of the exhibit and that he was assisted by Marjorie Conder, staff member of the LDS Museum of Church History and Art (Salt Lake City) as well as her colleague Kevin Neilson, who journeyed to Iceland to assist with the exhibit’s implementation. In 2004 this exhibit was transported to Reykjavík. On May 7, 2005, the exhibit re-opened at the Culture House, where it will be displayed until 2007.
34. The wife of David (Bonnie Ashby) and Brent’s spouse (Janice Ashby) have been a continual support to their husbands in this 2000 project and continue to support them in their work to preserve a bond between Iceland in Utah. In the summer of 1999, Brent Haymond (vice consul), David Ashby (president of the Icelandic Association) met with Valgeir Thorvaldsson (director of the Icelandic Emigration Center of Hofsós) and Sigríður Sigurðardóttir (director of the Skagafjörður Folk Museum in Glaumbær) met in Iceland to discuss the proposed exhibit “The Road to Zion.” On July 17, 1999, Thorvaldsson, Sigurðardóttir, and Ashby signed a Cooperative Tripartite Agreement between these three organizations to “strengthen the ties that exist between these institutions by attempting to independently and together to preserve and research the culture and heritage of the Icelandic immigrants and their descendants.” This agreement is in David Ashby’s possession. In February 2000, my wife was reading the local newspaper announcing plans for this exhibit. Due to my previous focus on immigration research as well as her intuition, she told me that she felt I should be involved with the project. This comment has led to my five-and-a-half year involvement with Icelandic Latter-day Saint research.

35. July 6, 2000, oral interview with David A. Ashby. Ashby served as the president of the Icelandic Association of Utah from 1994 to 1995 as well as 1999–2000. He is currently serving as the director of Iceland relations in the Association.


39. The memorial site also has new landscaping, which adds a renewed beauty to the lighthouse monument erected in 1938. On June 26, 2005, David A. Ashby told me that in a recent interview he had
with *Deseret News* reporter Roger Harding, David mentioned that there was symbolism behind the lighthouse that most visitors viewed as merely a reminder of the seafaring nature of the Icelandic people. However, Ashby added that to him it also represented the Light of Christ, which connects the Icelanders of Utah not only with the people of their homeland but also with all of God's children spread throughout the earth.

40. On December 1 the First Presidency issued the following statement: “We wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States. As members throughout the world remain in their homelands, working to rebuild the Church in their native countries, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church collectively” (*Church News*, December 11, 1999, 7).

41. As previously noted, the Articles of Faith are part of the Latter-day Saint scriptures. Article twelve states: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.”

42. This center is owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In 1995 Clark T. Thorstenson was instrumental in arranging to have the Icelandic genealogical materials transferred from the Family History Center in Salt Lake to the Regional Family History Center in Spanish Fork, a very important source for this topic of study. Phylis and Marilyn Ashby, both members of the Icelandic Association of Utah, have compiled several volumes of textual and photographic materials that highlight the history of the Icelandic history of Spanish Fork and provide biographical sketches of hundreds of Icelanders in this region. In 1995 an article titled “Icelandic Historian Receives Annual ‘Heritage Award,’” *Spanish Fork Express*, August 10, 1995, 8, indicates that Phylis, who had begun serving as the Icelandic Association historian since 1987, was the recipient of the annual Icelandic Heritage Award. It also notes that
Phylis would be passing on the job of historian to Marilyn but would still be of assistance if needed. Ashby, “The Icelandic Settlement in Utah,” 18, estimates that nearly one hundred thousand descendants have come from the original 410 Icelanders who immigrated to Utah between 1855 and 1914, but he notes that they are now scattered across America and in other parts of the world.
The following chart is built from La Nora Allred’s *The Icelanders of Utah*, “Icelanders Who Came to Utah,” 47–58, and Bliss K. Anderson’s personal database, which she has spent years compiling. While the monuments on the Westmann Islands, Iceland, and in Spanish Fork, Utah, list 410 Icelandic emigrants, the following chart lists 412 Icelandic emigrants. This apparent discrepancy is resolved when one notices that between numbers 249 and 250, there is a name without a number (+1) and that numbers 272 and 387 are numbers without names (–2). Further, number 369, Mary Larson Eakes, was born in Denmark and is therefore not an Icelandic emigrant (–1). Combined, they result in a net loss of two, bringing the total number on the chart from 412 to 410, the number that appears on the monuments.

To create this chart of Icelanders who came to Utah between 1855 and 1914, the following sources have been consulted, which include items used by La Nora Allred
Fire on Ice

and Bliss K. Anderson as well as items used to augment their work: Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971); Frank Esshom, *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah Pioneers Book Publishing Co., 1913); Kate B. Carter, comp., *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77); *Deseret Evening News*; Spanish Fork Membership Records (1852–91) and the Cleveland, Utah, Membership Records (1890–1941), Church Archives; La Nora Allred, *The Icelanders of Utah* (Spanish Fork, UT: Icelandic Association of Utah, 1998); Parish Record, Microfilms from the Family History Library in Salt Lake City; Junius Kristinsson, *Vesturfaraska 1870–1914: A Record of Emigrants from Iceland to America, 1870–1914* (Reykjavík, Institute of History, University of Iceland, 1983); Marvin E. Wiggins, *Mormons and their Neighbors: An Index to Over 75,000 Biographical Sketches from 1820 to the Present* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 1984); *Manuscript History of Icelandic Mission: 1815–1914*; “Historical Record of the Icelandic Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1873–1914” (Church Archives); “1874–1914 Icelandic Mission” (Church Archives); John Y. Bearnson, “Index to Persons Emigrating from Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland to Copenhagen, Utah, Hafnarfjord, Reykjavik, Seydisfjordur, and America, from 1823 to 1913” (Springville, UT: Genealogical Society, 1970); *International Genealogical Index; LDS Family History Suite* CD-ROM (Infobases: 1996).
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<th>D. O. Bap.</th>
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APPENDIX B

A Voice of Warning and Truth

The missionary tract *A Voice of Warning and Truth* was written by Þórður Diðriksson, who was born March 26, 1828, in Austur Landeyjar in Rangárvallasýslu, Iceland.¹ He embraced the restored gospel in the mid-nineteenth century and emigrated from Iceland in 1855, and after a few months’ stay in Copenhagen, moved to Utah, where he made his home in Spanish Fork the following year. His family was known for their kindness and hospitality, especially in assisting other Icelandic immigrants who settled in Spanish Fork in the latter half of the nineteenth century.²

In 1875 he returned to Iceland to serve a mission among his people and returned to Spanish Fork two years later. Following his return, he wrote *A Voice of Warning and Truth*, which Latter-day Saint missionaries began to use in Iceland in 1879. Niels Wilhelmsen, president of the Scandinavian Mission headquartered in Copenhagen, arranged to have two thousand copies printed, which were proofread by a local Icelandic student.³ A quarter of a century later, Loftur Bjarnason, who
was presiding over the Icelandic Mission, wrote, “The precious truths this book contains have been the cause of many accepting the Gospel and emigrating to Utah, where they are to-day staunch and faithful Latter-day Saints. Those who have received this book in this country and have . . . embraced its doctrines, value it so highly that they would not part with it for many times its price.”

It has probably resulted in the conversion of more Icelanders than any other written item prior to the 1981 publication of the Book of Mormon. In fact, when the Icelandic Mission was reopened in 1975, President Byron T. Geslison had his missionaries use this same tract as their main proselytizing tool, as had been done the previous century. The text is reproduced below for the first time in English.

A Voice of Warning and Truth about the Fundamental Beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Written by Þórður Didriksson

Translated from the Icelandic by Darron S. Allred

Preface

Some men write for entertainment, some for money, some for edification and blessing, both in a spiritual and physical manner; my object will be for the reader to judge after having read the following pages.

About the law of the kingdom of God and the gospel, and how a man can become blessed after this life, have I chosen to write; that is the thing that has encouraged most good and
God-fearing men to think and speak about it, from the beginning of the world, of God's word, of Jesus's word, of his holy prophets and apostles' word. I want to prove and show what it is.

I hope to be able, with the help of God, to give explanations to those who, with a sincere heart, wish to know the will of God to their salvation, and who believe on his word. And if I should show and prove the learning and doctrines of man to be false, by comparing it with the word of God and the truth, then would all know that I am not at odds with man or men, rather with that which is at odds with those holy writings; for, they are a foundation, a rule, a measuring stick which I build upon now and again.

If I might become a tool in the hand of God through these few lines to show the law of the kingdom of God and the redemptive work, then should it gladden me both in time and eternity; and that many might see and believe the truth, which God has revealed through Jesus Christ, is my prayer in Jesus's name, amen.

To the Reader

It is my purpose by publishing this voice of warning to allow all to know what the gospel of Jesus Christ is, and that it is again given to the earth in its fulness, according to the prophecies and promises, and to show what we build our faith and learning on and whether that which those scribes, and some of the newspapers, say about the Latter-day Saints is true, and to show that those prejudicial judgments are not built upon the correct foundation. No reasonable man or woman wants to condemn something which they cannot speak against with reasonable grounds, or proofs from the word of God or scripture; otherwise, it is foolishness, exceptional and malignant. Therefore is the reader willingly bidden to try and prove all
things, and hold fast to the good and true, and forget not to pray to God for wisdom, which he giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not (James 1:5).

**First Chapter**

*About faith and conversion*

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Matthew 16:26). What is the gospel of the kingdom of God? It is his decrees and commands, heavenly proclamations and laws, which all God’s children must obey, just as it is spoken and written in those holy scriptures, to receive freedom and elevation into God’s kingdom.

Immediately after Adam was placed in paradise, God gave him a commandment, which was that he may not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for then he should surely die. Sorrow, sickness, toil, and death—with many other things—were the consequences for breaking the commandments of God. But the serpent came and said to the woman that God did not mean what he said; viz., that ye shall not die but shall be as God by knowing good from evil. They do the same who have altered those laws which he gave. They say: It ought not to be understood as it is written, and that God does not mean what he says, just like the serpent said to Eve, that they would not die. But God meant what he said. When God commanded Noah to build the ark, for he intended to have a flood come over the earth, he meant what he said. God’s word is the one saving teaching; it is a perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). It is a law of liberty indeed perfect to liberate
the sinner if he obeys in the same manner as it was taught by Jesus and his apostles. It is the everlasting gospel (Revelation 13:6). It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Romans 1:16). It is, first, to believe God's word and Jesus Christ's teachings and be obedient to them in the same manner as the apostles taught them; second, to turn oneself away from all evil; third, to be baptized by immersion for the forgiveness of sin; fourth, the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Ghost. All must obey these commands who want to receive salvation in God's kingdom. These are the glorious gospel's first fundamental principles, which Jesus instituted in his Church. It is the everlasting gospel's truth. It is the law of the New Testament. It is the power of God unto salvation, and the perfect law of liberty, as James said.

The first and greatest fundamental principle of the gospel is faith; it is the assurance of things not seen; it is the driving force of those things that men do.

Faith is the confident expectation of those things which a man hopes and an assurance about that which he cannot see. By faith we feel assured that the world was created by God's word in such a fashion that the seen was brought into existence by the unseen. By Abel's faith, God accepted his sacrifice, when he brought it, over Cain's. By his faith, Enoch was taken up that he should not see death. Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who will come to God must believe that he exists, and [he] rewards all those who seek him.

Faith had the effect that when Noah was warned by God concerning that which he could yet not see, he feared God and built the ark to the salvation of his house. By faith he condemned the world and became a partaker of those justifications which come by faith.
By his faith, Abraham was obedient and then was told to travel to a certain place which would become his inheritance; and he went, though he did not know where he should go. By faith Sarah obtained the power to conceive, though she had passed her childbearing years. Because of his faith, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. Because of his faith in the future, Isaac gave a blessing to Jacob and Esau. Because of his faith, Jacob, on his dying day, blessed both the sons of Joseph. Because of his faith, Joseph, on his deathbed, spoke about the exodus of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. Through their faith, the parents of Moses hid him for three months after his birth. Because of faith, Moses left the land of Egypt. Because of faith, he held the Passover and smeared the blood of the paschal lamb over his doorway. Because of faith, the people of Israel walked over the Red Sea. Because of faith, the walls of Jericho fell after being encircled for seven days. Because of faith, the harlot Rahab was not destroyed together with the other unbelievers. Need I go on? I would have little time left if I went on to discuss Gideon, Barak, Samson, Japheth, David, Samuel, and the prophets who because of their faith conquered kingdoms, established righteousness, obtained promises, closed the mouths of lions, extinguished the power of fire, eluded the edge of the sword, became strong after sickness, became powerful in battle, and put the armies of enemies to flight (Hebrews 11:6–34).

It is clearly apparent that faith comes into the heart through the testimony of a witness whom God raises up and sends out to preach his word and witness of the truth. All faith has its foundation in conviction, either right or wrong, whether it is regarding earthly or heavenly things.

Jesus likens the gospel of the kingdom to a good seed which a certain man sowed in his field. Let us, therefore, use
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a voice of warning and truth

the example of an individual seed to explain the fundamental principles of the faith. When the Indians in America saw the grand effects of gunpowder among the European men who had settled among them, they sought fervently to gain the use of it for themselves. A number of less-than-principled European men told them that [the gunpowder was] seeds, which were sown in the earth and gave a rich harvest. Some of these unknowing men believed this and bought a great deal of it and sowed it with great care, but the fruit was—as it is for all false faith—to no effect.

Faith is to a great degree—as has been said before—built on the proofs and testimony which come through sight, hearing, and our own experiences, habits and practices, superstitions and more. For example, all the inhabitants of the earth for many hundreds of years were deceived with the belief that the sun, moon, planets, and stars revolved around the earth until Copernicus said that it was the earth that revolved [around the sun]. This was not a false belief that impeded the salvation of man. All the inhabitants of the earth were destroyed for false belief and unbelief in the days of Noah even when eight souls had the correct and liberating belief. In the same fashion, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their false beliefs and unbelief, but Lot and his two daughters were saved by their correct belief. Nineveh was saved by its correct belief.

One false belief in relationship to many temporal things is not so detrimental and condemning in and of itself as not believing the message which God has sent for the liberation and salvation of man. Death and destruction have always been in store for such. That written above confirms this. When one false or true belief is strong enough, it leads to works. Paul's [false] faith that Jesus of Nazareth was an imposter led him to oppress His followers. Afterward, his faith led him to endure
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chains, prison, and death for His name. The faith of many led them to take the lives of the apostles and then justify themselves, believing it was an agreeable service to God. The faith of others led them to give up all of their possessions and endure prison and death. These both had faith and works; the aforementioned, incorrect faith and evil works; the latter, correct faith and good works.

That testimony which God gives to confirm the divinity of his revelations is sufficiently powerful to awaken the faith in all those hearts who search it out in the correct way, as God has commanded. Therefore, they who have learned wisdom but follow it not will be punished.

Some will say: If the testimony were strong enough we would be forced to believe. But this is not true. Most acknowledge that the testimony and proofs which Jesus gave were powerful enough to convince all that he was sent from God, but they believed him not, even though he gave signs and miracles. The testimony can be strong enough, but if men refuse to search God’s word and are afraid that it is true because it goes against the custom and habit of the time, or they are afraid that they will lose their reputation and the friendships of the world and become despised and ridiculed and cut off from human companionship, these then become the obstacles which prevent them from investigating the word of God and the truth, along with other things.

Some have investigated it for the purpose of condemning it, though they find that it is the truth. Others investigate it and find that it is true. And though their conscience then condemns them if they do not accept it, they fear being an outcast in the world and subsequently reject it. The first act of a true faith is to turn away from all sin; next, to be baptized by immersion for the remission of sins and for the laying on of hands.
for the gift of the Holy Ghost. No one has that liberating faith or can enter Christ’s kingdom without believing this. It is to no avail to ask God for forgiveness of sins in some other fashion. If a man does not believe this, he is pitiably deceived and will lose his salvation after having an opportunity to hear and obey the same.

What does it profit, my brothers, though one says he has faith but has not works? Will his faith save him? If faith has not works, then it is dead by itself. But now one says: You have faith, but I have works. Show me therefore thy faith without thy works and I shall show you mine by my works. You believe that God is one, and in that you do well. The devils believe such also, and tremble. But, unlearned man, you shall know that faith is dead without works.

Did not Abraham, our father, justify himself because of works after having laid his son Isaac on the altar? Do you not see that faith was working in unison with his works, and that faith is made perfect with works? And thus is the scripture fulfilled which says: “Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,” and Abraham was called God’s friend. Ye see, therefore, that man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. For just as the body is dead without the spirit, so is faith dead without works (James 2:14–26).

When a man believes the revealed word of God, or the law of the New Testament, which the apostle James called a perfect law of liberty, then a turning away from all evil, in word and deed, is the next fundamental principle of the gospel which a man begins to obey. Then, and not before, the man has correctly repented of his sins and has a humble and contrite heart before God, though his repentance is not fully acceptable until there is forgiveness of committed sins, just as faith by itself is not enough. But this makes it possible to obey the third
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fundamental principle, which is baptism for the forgiveness of sins by those who have full authority from God to perform this solemn ordinance.

It was not the intention of the Savior when he atoned for the sins of the world to save mankind in their sins or to forgive them their evil deeds or crimes without faith and repentance. It was with the stipulation that sins are forgiven through baptism.

When the apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached the risen Jesus and lay clear the revelations which had literally been fulfilled concerning the Savior, they believed that he [Jesus] was the true Messiah who had been spoken of in the writings. He [Peter] said unto them: Repent and then be baptized for the remission of sins, in the name of Jesus Christ, and thereafter receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). None could become a member of the Church of Jesus Christ in those days without obeying this liberating law of the New Testament. The innocent being—or dumb child—which has done no sin cannot repent. None can who cannot know their sin. To sin against God is to violate his commands, which those without knowledge cannot do. But sin cannot exist unless a law exists, says Paul in Romans 5:13. But no law will be given those who are not come to the age of accountability.

SECOND CHAPTER

About Christianity, baptism, the laying on of hands, and more

The Catholic religious denomination is the largest in the world. Russia, France, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Austria [are all Catholic countries]. Some [of these people] are Roman Catholics, some are Greek Orthodox Catholics. These total approximately two hundred million, but all Christians
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

together total approximately four hundred million, or about a third of the inhabitants of the world.

The Roman Empire was the fourth [empire] which would rule over the earth, or the iron feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Augustus was a Roman emperor, and from him went forth the command that all the world should be taxed.

The chief captain did not dare scourge Paul, for he was Roman-born, especially since he [the chief captain] had pur-

The Jews were afraid of the Romans. “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:48), which they actually did forty years later and overran the people of God.

The apostles were crucified, beheaded, stoned, burned, and denied their lives in many ways. The saints were treated as wild beasts and were destroyed, some being forced to give up their faith to remain alive. The priesthood, or the power to bind and release which Jesus gave his apostles, was taken away.

The Church of Jesus Christ was the woman who had around her a ring of sunlight, the light of the truth of God's holy word. The crown on her head with twelve stars was the twelve apostles, elders, and the headpiece of the Christians. She cried with the pains of childbirth; that is, she felt oppressed and was in a deadly struggle. She gave birth to a boy who would rule over all nations with an iron rod. The boy is the power and authority of the priesthood. The rod is the truth, knowledge, and fundamental principles of the faith by which all nations should direct themselves through the boy (or the priesthood). The boy was suddenly carried away and brought before God and his throne. The Church was destroyed. The power and author-

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taken to God and his throne. The woman fled into the desert. The dragon, or the devil, that Roman power, the pope, *that is* the beast. He promised to fight against the saints and overcome them. He was given power over all kindreds, nations, tongues, and peoples (Revelation 12; 13:7). The apostles speak of the Apostasy, as do the prophets. The apostle [Paul] speaks about that godless son who rose up against all which could be called good and holy, who set himself in God's temple and made as if he were God (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

In Paul's last epistle: But the Spirit says assuredly that in the last days many would deny the faith, make fast their faith on an evil spirit and devilish knowledge. [They], through deceit, teach lies and are branded in their conscience, prohibit marrying and deny the use of certain foods which God has approved (1 Timothy 4:1–3). The pope sold forgiveness of sins, banned the priests from marrying and from eating meat during the fast, and I think that this is his clear mark, though he considers himself a representative of God, the head of the Christians, in the place of Peter here on the earth. If he were such, then he would teach the same knowledge as Jesus and his apostles. But he will be that great whore who sits on the many waters, which means nations, tongues, and people, or those lands and countries which were previously enumerated.

The Catholic Church has long clothed itself in false ecclesiastical vestments red with innocent blood of the thousands it has killed, holding in its hands the power and respect of human honor, meaning it has the keys of heaven and hell, and which has trodden under its feet many vows of freedom, both spiritual and physical, and which will find in its heartless breast the knife of slaughtered protestors or Protestants, though they themselves are descendants of that great whore who sits upon the many waters, and with whom the kings of
the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth are drunken with the wine of her fornication (Revelation 17:2). The woman was drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (v. 6). “And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (v. 15). Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter (Revelation 4:1).

He [John] was in prison on the isle of Patmos; some say he died there, but we believe as the disciples. Jesus said, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (John 21:22). And this saying went abroad among the disciples that this disciple would not die. The angel said unto him, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and many kings (Revelation 10:11).

But let us look at the Christians a little more. [There are] five million of the so-called Christian soldiers, which each year are taught the methods of war or to kill their fellow Christian brothers. The nations sigh and groan under this yoke of oppression to pay the tax to uphold this waste. The world is full of fortified cities [skönsum] and castles. The harbors are full of warships and cannon boats to destroy as fast as possible those most necessary and best of men which the nations have. Each year many millions are employed to this end. The beggar may pay a tax to fund preparation for this war of Christians. Is this the Church of Jesus Christ? I say no. Is there no way to reform the Christians? Is this “to love God with all thine heart and thy neighbor as thyself”? It is written: Thou shalt not kill. Thereby shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. Without such ye are alone, ye are not mine. He who says he loves God but hates his brother is a liar. Wondrous towns and magnificent cities which have taken men's lives and
many centuries to build up and which have cost millions and hundreds of millions to build are in a few days laid in ashes.

A frightening group of handless and footless and in all respects maimed men lies in the hospitals, multitudes live with maimings and suffering all their lives. Many have wives and children. The blood cries from death, and the sound is heard from every nation. Widows wail, with no assistance, as the children cry for peace, help with the blessing nowhere to be had; hell, it seems, is next. Are these the beautiful flowers and magnificent fruits of Christianity? Jesus said: A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, but these are bad. By their fruits ye shall know them. Thus it is with the Christians of today. If they were good, then their fruits would be good.

I do not say that the Catholic and Protestant churches have done no good. They have sometimes fed the body, but never the spirit. They have many murders and martyrs. They are full of charity for the robber and the beggar—a promiser of gifts to warring kings, having many false teachers. They have built many houses for the rich, but few for the poor. They have made thousands of widows and millions of fatherless [children]. They pass the plate with one hand while holding a sword in the other. Most of the ecclesiastical laws are instituted by the magistrates but are violated as if it little mattered; and if blame is not accepted by others, sin is assigned and death meted out.

Well has the apostle Peter said: And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you (2 Peter 2:3), speaking of false teachers who shall come.

Christians sent priests and missionaries to China and other Gentile nations. They sent the Bible and Testaments to the east but swords and cannons in all directions to kill their own men. Read the histories of the world and the religious wars and the
Christians will become terrible in your eyes. The more we look at this terrifying monster, the more we shudder at it.

Now let us look at the Lutheran faith and church a little, for our forefathers have lived and died upholding it. So have all the heathens and idol worshipers done, living and upholding their faith, so it is no proof that the faith is correct.

Luther, 1,500 years after the birth of Christ, begins to fight against the pope and show those great evils that he had instituted. [Luther] received adherents and established a religious organization, which since that time has remained. And it is a fact that he did much good, and [did it] the best that he knew how.

The baptism of children was introduced in the third century to a small degree (see Thomas Vestlek, p. 52). Salmasius, who bears witness to the remarkable nature of the master storyteller and historical writer, [says]: We and thou believe the Bible, and it is the grounds, rules, and the norm which all Christians think they build on and follow.

The grace of God comes to light in his word, which may be read in those holy scriptures. And in another place: It is assured, that all those commands of God which men are concerned with can be found in the Bible. These things the youth are taught, which are good, that Jesus has introduced, [are] laws and rules—or fundamental principles of the faith—which both we and thou believe. But do you have anything in the Lutheran Church which Jesus did not teach?

It was the custom in the New Testament to bless children. Aged Simon took Jesus up into his arms and blessed him. Jesus took small children into his arms and blessed them. This was not baptizing them. Barbellius has said that the baptism of children [babies] was not known until the third century, and was introduced outside of the direction of Jesus. The baptism of children by immersion was first introduced in Africa by an
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evilly educated and ungodly people who worshiped secretly and sacrificed to Saturn, the blacks being sacrificed most of all.

Once, when war seemed imminent, they said that their God was angry. The sacrifice was not good, meaning the black children. They then killed two hundred white children from the most honorable of men that they had. The idol was made out of iron, or copper, with a large fire in the front. The priest was clothed in red; the child, in blue. The child, or the sacrifice, was laid in the idol’s hands and then dropped into the fire. Great noise and music were used to drown out the cries and pains of those who were burned. And then some began to baptize their children by immersion (since no other baptism was known) before they were sacrificed. And these called themselves Christians.

You will perhaps say that these were heathens. But we may as well say that Israel had been heathen, for Aaron constructed the golden calf by the consent of Israel and they worshiped it while Moses was up in the mountain.

The year AD 251 was the first recorded account of baptizing by sprinkling. Novatian contracted a terrible illness and was “sprinkled” in his bed, and this was called baptism (Thomas Vestlek, p. 43). Thus began this doctrine of men, and in the fourth and fifth century more took up this blasphemy (namely, African Catholics). The Roman Catholic Church, the pope, and various kings gave out laws to obey this evil doctrine. And if they were not obeyed, they were painfully put to death, which is awful to read (see Thomas Vestlek, p. 87).

The word baptism is a Greek word, and it is surely so that it means “immersion” if the Greek know their own language at all. And from the first, upon becoming Christian, and until this day, they have baptized by immersion in water. The German New Testament says (Matthew 3:1): In those days came John
Appendix B: A Voice of Warning and Truth

(that is, the Baptist) and in English [and Þórður writes this next part in English], John the Dipper, or in other words, John the Baptist. The Baptist Church has baptism by immersion—the correct way.

Josephus, the historian, in his second volume, page 905, talks about his journey to Rome and his shipwreck and how he survived with eighty others. “Our ship,” he says, “was baptized, put under or buried under the water.” Homer, the Greek poet, said, “When the blacksmith tempers iron, he baptizes it, dips it in water.” When Josephus speaks about Jonah the prophet when he fled from the presence of the Lord, that the ship was “skírt, baptized, dipped down in the water till they cast him out.” Dr. Kompell says that “the word baptism means ‘by immersion.’” Tertullian, the highest of the Latin fathers, says, “‘Tingari’ was employed when speaking about colors, specifically the color of the clothes worn to dip them down according to the law” (Thomas Vestlek, p. 17; emphasis added).

This baptism of babies will not be upheld by God’s word or the scriptures. Lutherans have for a long time had witnesses when they have baptized their [little] children. Priests baptize or dip their hands in the water in place of the child. And so are their hands baptized but not the child. They ask the child: Do you believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, deny the devil and all his works and acts? The child is silent, unless it should cry. It has no ability to believe. It does not know its mother tongue; therefore no law is set. It is helpless and can do neither good nor bad. The witnesses say yes, though they lie. You believe that the child cannot come into the kingdom of God unless so many say these untruths. God knows that the child cannot believe before it comes to the age of wisdom and accountability and claims therefore no faith or obedience to his commandments without knowledge.
Each who believes and is baptized shall be saved. But each who believes not shall be condemned. It is first to believe. If you believe with all your heart, then it is possible, said Phillip to the eunuch, and he answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37). But, dear reader, they have taken this verse away in the most recent edition of the Bible. But you find it in all the old editions. There exist, in spite of this, many proofs against the baptism of babies. They have changed the next verse into two to have forty verses in the chapter. From this it is apparent that all must believe the first. See verse 38, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” This was not to give a name or to wash his head, rather baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, just as Jesus introduced it in his Church. He, himself, was baptized in the river Jordan and said that he began through this act to fulfill all righteousness. He gave us an example, that we should follow in his footsteps, or in other words, obey those teachings, laws and regulations which he instituted in his Church.

This baptism by immersion is that which Jesus calls rebirth. This is the thing that Nicodemus did not understand when he came to Jesus by night and asked: How can a man be born when he is old? He was thought one of the greatest in Israel or a learned man [but] did not know this. Jesus answered: Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Being born of water means being buried in it. To be born of the Spirit was by the laying on of hands for the receiving of the Holy Ghost, which all received after being baptized.

When Peter the apostle, on the day of Pentecost, full of the Holy Ghost, preached the resurrected Jesus and the people believed, they said to Peter and the apostles: Men and brethren,
what shall we do? Peter said to them: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:37–40).

These fundamental principles of the faith were the first, i.e., faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them; they came and prayed for the Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he had fallen upon none of them. All had been baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus. They laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given by the laying on of hands, he wanted to buy the power with money, so that over all those whom he laid hands, they might receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14–20).

From this it is clear to understand that the Holy Ghost was given in this fashion [by the laying on of hands]. And the apostle says: Ye obey the covenant and your children also, as will those in the future. What covenant? [The covenant of] the forgiveness of sins through the correct baptism and of the Holy Ghost with the laying on of hands and by obeying these laws which Jesus instituted in his Church. All these shall receive these gifts and blessings; Those too who in the future will be obedient. That is to say: [the blessings will be] to the end of the earth to all who obey the teachings of Christ. But no one can believe until he hears. Therefore they are not all responsible until they hear the true gospel.
When the apostle Paul traveled into the land of Asia, he came to Ephesus and met a number of disciples to whom he said: Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? They said no: We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? They said: Unto John's baptism. Paul answered: John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve (Acts 19:1–7). This shows that baptism was imperfect without the Holy Ghost being given by the laying on of hands. And therefore were they rebaptized in the correct way. John baptized the converted with the baptism of repentance. Young children cannot repent. Those who are without the ability to understand cannot become converted.

He told the people to believe on him who should come after him. Which people? Those whom he had baptized. Young children could not. John baptized in the river Jordan those who confessed their sins. Young children could not do that either (Matthew 3:6). I baptize you to the betterment of life (v. 11). To baptize in water means by immersion. To baptize with water means by sprinkling. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). To be buried in baptism unto death. What death? The death of sin; for their sins were dead or forgiven and blotted out by being buried in the water or baptized by immersion.
And after having received the laying on of hands for God’s Spirit were they in a position to walk in a newness of life? But [little] children cannot do this though they are baptized, or their heads are moistened, and are given a name. Baptism does not take away the filthiness of the body; rather, it is a covenant of a good conscience before God with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:21). That is to say; though the body is immersed in water in baptism, then it is not a fact that it washes its filth; rather, it provides a covenant of a good conscience with God, which little children don’t know how to do.

What is a covenant of a good conscience? It is a peace agreement with God, the forgiveness of sins and a hope of eternal life, by obeying and believing those main principles of the faith, or those new and everlasting covenants, those saving laws which Jesus ordained in his Church. Jesus says: Except a man be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5). The apostle Paul calls it being reconceived in Christ.

There is no command or example in all the holy writings to baptize young children or to confirm this teaching of man.

Third Chapter

About the Atonement and God’s reality, the officials of God’s Church, those spiritual gifts, and more

But now let us say a few words about the redemptive work which Jesus provided to all those with his death, and speak first about the atonement for original sin.

We believe in God the Eternal Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, who bears witness of the Father and the Son from eternity to eternity. It is certain that death
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came over all men because of the original sin, but not because of our own sins. And thus all men were cast out of God’s presence spiritually and physically. The body [was left] to eternal sleep in the earth and never more to rise up; but the soul, to an eternal prison under the power of Satan. And in these circumstances, all were lost and knew not how to free themselves therefrom.

It is also certain that with Jesus’ death and Resurrection, all men are without exception perfectly, and in all ways, redeemed from the Fall of Adam, both soul and body, so that the terrible consequences of original sin do not eternally separate God and his children. And this is given to all without covenant or condition. That is to say, whether we believe or not, whether we are Christian or Gentile, bad or good, it makes no difference in regard to original sin. For its curse and consequence come equally over all the best men of God as over the worst evildoer without their willingness or agreement to such. And they become equally redeemed from its curse, or death, whether they know or believe that God exists, whether they do his will or not. For as in Adam, all die, so shall all be made alive in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22). And this happens in the Resurrection. Then, some rise up to everlasting life; but some, to everlasting shame and disgrace (Daniel 12:2). Therefore, as by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life (Romans 5:18). This means the inherited sin and the resurrection of all flesh. This is the reason that all men’s spirits will be given bodies and are made free from this first death. This is the reason that Jesus said: If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me (John 12:32). In this way, Jesus has paid for all Adam’s descendants, or for original sin. He has made of no effect the power of death and
has won a victory over the grave and has freed all the prisoners which death had taken captive and has brought them into the presence of God to live eternally with him.

If they themselves have done no sin, then no one will be called to account for the sin of Adam, for nothing could be done with it.

You will perhaps say, dear reader, that we may, though, suffer a great deal for Adam’s sin, which is sorrow and toil and death, and it is true. But we would have been eternally dead, and soul and body separated, had not Jesus paid the debt. Therefore, Jesus said: Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. They had done no sin themselves; therefore the kingdom of heaven was theirs. For Jesus had paid for the original sin.

All men, after coming to the age of accountability and having known the gospel of Jesus Christ and God’s commands, are answerable for their own words and deeds. And if their deeds are evil, they will be cast out of God’s presence a second time, or die the second death. For that servant who knows the will of his master and does not follow it will suffer the sore consequences. Depart from me, all ye men who do evil works. God cannot save his people in their sins. Thus they will go away into everlasting punishment; but the good, unto eternal life (Matthew 25:46). But these wicked servants ye shall cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 25:30). Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, and so on. The way unto life is strait, and few there be that find it. Many are called, but few are chosen. This shows that many will be lost.

What then shall we do, dear reader, to obtain eternal life since we have all broken God’s commands to a greater or lesser degree and have misused our agency in word and deed. And
our conscience accuses us that we have poorly used that light and knowledge which we have received.

Is it enough to call, Lord, Lord, and read long family prayers and to pray? No. Is it enough to obey the ten commandments? No. Is it enough to fast two times a week and give tithing of all that we own? No. Is it enough to distribute all our possessions to the poor as though we had charity? No. Is it enough to do well unto others as we would have others do unto us? No. Is it enough that our prayers and almsgiving ascend unto God in heaven? No, though this is all good and pleasing unto God. Is it enough to go to the altar and receive forgiveness of sins from the priest? No.

Have we, then, no chance to become saved from our sins? Yes, assuredly. The same Jesus who has freed us from the original sin, without covenants, has also saved us from our own sins, with certain conditions, or through a certain way. It is by obeying certain edicts and commands, which are these: First, to believe in God, the Eternal Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, and his suffering and death for mankind, and the Holy Ghost, which is given to all who obey the true gospel. Second, to repent and turn away from all sin. And if we have committed a wrong against our fellow man, then correct it as much as possible. Third, to be baptized by immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins by those who have authority to do so, or [by] the holy priesthood, otherwise it is invalid before the Lord. Fourth, [to receive] the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, which leads to all truth, to know the will of God. All who obey these teachings and fundamental principles of the faith receive forgiveness of sins as in the ancient Church.

The first Christians were in this way born of water and Spirit and know no other way to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus says: They are then initiated into the kingdom of God as
his sons and daughters, lawful heirs of the kingdom of God and joint heirs with Christ; so, where this knowledge and these fundamental principles of the faith are not, the Church of Jesus Christ is not.

Dear reader, is it wise to think that we can employ and take advantage of Jesus Christ’s offering, [and receive] eternal salvation in his kingdom without obeying those first, fundamental principles which all had to obey in the first Christian religion? Is it wise to say you believe in Jesus Christ but then not acknowledge those teachings which he taught to be necessary? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away (Matthew 24:35). Jesus says: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18). And in another place: I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6); that is to say, through that knowledge which he gave and instituted in his Church, which will stand though heaven and earth pass away.

Some will say: Can you forgive sins like God by baptizing people or burying them down in water? Could the apostles and those who came after them who had the holy priesthood atone for the sins of the people by baptizing for the forgiveness of sins according to those rules and in the way that Jesus set up in his Church? Yes. Or could the priests of God—who had the Aaronic Priesthood— atone for the sins of the people with those sin sacrifices which God had appointed, which were in the similitude and a model of the Savior? Did not God forgive sins in this way? We answer, yes, assuredly. In the same fashion God forgives sins with his holy priesthood and authority, which he gave to the earth in these last days, by obeying those laws and fundamental principles of the faith which Jesus instituted in his Church.
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When the sons of Aaron took each of them ember vessels, and put therein strange—or unholy—fire, and over that, incense, and bore it before the Lord contrary to the Lord's will, then fire went out from the Lord and destroyed them (Leviticus 10:1). This strange fire—which is spoken of here—means that they did not take the fire from the holy altar which sanctified the fire to burn their incense as the Lord had commanded. And is this enough to frighten and judge those who have altered the laws of the New Testament in like fashion? They have taken strange fire to burn their incense. They have had the command of man with which to sanctify it. They have not taken the fire from that holy altar of Jesus Christ to come before God with. And if they had had the holy priesthood, then [it] would have occurred just so with them. If today's teachers and Christians are ashamed to acknowledge the teachings of Jesus Christ, then will he be ashamed to acknowledge them before his Heavenly Father. Then he comes in power and glory.

But let us go back, dear reader. I said that baptism of children came first in Africa, in the year AD 251—or approximately 1,267 years before Luther's Reformation. And in the fourth and fifth centuries, many young children were baptized by immersion. Many doctrines of men were introduced by the Catholics, such as prayers for dead persons, incense in their houses of worship, crosses in official acts, candles burned in their churches by day, lamps burned in the path of martyrs. Communion was given to young children and those who were come near unto death and to some who were dead (see Thomas Vestlek, p. 68). And I believe that the Catholic Church has borrowed to some degree from its mother, with regards to the baptism of babies, lights in churches and crosses, and in giving communion to dying and old persons. After the priests, monks, kings, and the powerful in the land had signed and
approved these idiotic ceremonies, the common person was forced to go along by the sword and threat of death, and many thousands were killed.

In the sixth century were found 2,100 in England and Wales who held fast to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Bishop Gregorious in Rome sent a monk there by the name of Augustine, who, in the end, destroyed them with the sword and by fire. Among them was one woman which would not give up her faith. This woman was pregnant and was in bonds a long time. And when she bore the child, it had the marks of the bonds on its hands. Later she was put in the stocks and from there taken by night and placed in a sack and submerged under the ice. Another woman, who was burned, gave birth to a child in the fire before she died (see Thomas Vestlek, p. 72). Many were burned and tortured unto death who spoke and wrote against the baptism of little children. And after Luther’s Reformation not just a few were killed for the same (see Thomas Vestlek, 3rd edition, pp. 88–105). He published one book in 1814 in London in England which is a small part of the historical and instructive books concerning the teachings of Christ. Eight learned men signed the book to confirm the truthfulness of it.

John Arason, born in 1448, was chosen to be a bishop in 1522, was ordained in Norway, and came again to Iceland in 1525. He remained true to the papal religion and was, together with his son, Ari (a lawyer), and Reverend Björn, beheaded in Skálholt in the fall of 1550 (see Joseph Hoster, 250). Was this not done thirty-two years after the Reformation by Luther’s followers? They killed the highest authorities of the land, both of the spiritual and secular classes. Where or when has that great whore, the Roman Catholic church, received the authority to kill those who don’t want to follow her laws and
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teachings? Where have the many Protestant churches—her
daughters—received the authority to do the same? They can't
take their example from Jesus or his apostles to have acted
thus. Quite the contrary. Jesus says, Bless them that curse you,
do good unto them that hate you, and pray for them which . . .
persecute you (Matthew 5:44). They deny all godly revelation,
so they cannot have it from God, but rather from the devil,
who was a liar and murderer from the beginning.

Some will say, God commanded the people of Israel to
destroy the people in the land of Canaan. But who can argue
what is right or wrong with God? Is it not the same whether
he destroys by flood, famine, disease, or the sword? Does he
not have the right to punish in the manner that he wishes? Yes,
assuredly.

There are thousands of proofs to confirm that the bap-
tism of little children was not known before the third century,
because all needed to understand their faith before they were
baptized, just as children in our day are not confirmed before
they can know their so-called Christian religion. So, none
were taken into the congregation of Christ before they knew
and believed the teachings of Christ. After the so-called god-
parents—or the mother of light—have convinced the priest
that the child will believe in the Trinity—or the Godhead—and
renounce the devil and all his evil by saying yes for the child,
are they, though, not more answerable for the instruction and
upbringing [of the child] than others, though the parents de-
part this life?

What then are children taught when they reach the years
of accountability? That God is a spirit; for ought not they who
worship him do it in the right spirit? And that is right. The
word of God says the same. But you add on "unseen being" and
say, "He has neither body nor limb and could not be seen with

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natural eyes, neither depicted in any picture.” Why then is it asked in churches and in households in the words of blessings that he would allow his countenance to shine on us or lift up his gentle face over us if he has no countenance or face? Then it is the greatest foolishness and error to ask God for that which he cannot give, so you destroy and make into nothing that which you yourselves teach—on the one hand that he has no form; on the other hand that he has both countenance and face.

God encourages us to know him through his words, which may be read in the holy scriptures. But what do they say about God? God said, We will make man in our own image and likeness. And God created man in his own image (Genesis 1:26–27). This is the genealogical history of Adam. When God created man, he made man after his own image (Genesis 5:1). Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (God’s face). “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:28, 30). “They saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink” (Exodus 24:10–11). “And [ . . .] while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shall see my back parts” (Exodus 33:22–23). “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his [friend]” (Exodus 33:11). “With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold” (Numbers 12:8).
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When God told Moses to say to Aaron how he should bless Israel, he said, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Numbers 6:24–26). The Lord says that he himself has a face and a countenance though you teach that he has them not. Do you know better than the Lord? Can you receive any better proof than his own word that he has no body? If not, then is your knowledge false. And the Lord appeared unto Abraham as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And Abraham washed his feet and gave him food to eat. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? (Genesis 18). “And upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it” (Ezekiel 1:26). “An hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein” (Ezekiel 1:26; 2:9). Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:56).

The apostle said that Jesus was ascended, and sits on the right hand of the Father; In the right hand of him who sat on the throne I saw a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals (Revelation 5:1). Jesus says that he is the Son of Man. He was so like his Father that he said to Phillip, when he asked him to show unto him the Father, he who sees me, sees the Father. Jesus said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). There is nothing clearer or more obvious to understand from the scriptures than that God has a body, and it is perfectly shown and proven through his own word.

Is it possible that those learned Christian theologians could be teaching the people that which is expressly against the scriptures? Have the customs and habits of the past centuries blinded the eyes of their understanding that they consider
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the conjecture and notions of foolish men—which have no foundation—to be more reliable than those holy scriptures? It seems to be so regarding that true God, who created man in his own image.

But let us turn our attention to additional doctrines and laws of the Lutheran church. Children are not called Christian before they are confirmed. Confirmation is not a teaching of Christ, nor of Luther. Rather, [it is] a royal decree and is 134 years old. The king Christian VI established it on January 9, 1736, and it would have been established as law in Iceland eight years later on May 27, 1744 (see the report of the eighteenth century, p. 203). It reads thus: I consider the most noteworthy examples available of his reign to be the following decrees and royal letters about confirmation of children. Such is the inexperience of the Christianized concerning the obeying of royal decrees. The Christian takes his name from Christ, but if he does not have the teachings of Christ, then it is nothing more than the name of Christ. These doctrines are employed in place of baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, as it was before in the first Christianity.

Has Jesus slackened and recalled these fundamental articles of his holy Church? No; how then are they become of no worth? Does it take other doctrines and laws to save man in the kingdom of God in our day than it did in the days of the apostles? No. Have not those Catholic religious villains confused the sentences, confused the commandments, and made nothing of the new and everlasting covenants? Yes, assuredly; have the men of the Lutheran faith taken up and obeyed those first laws of the Church of Christ? No. Jesus says to his apostles: Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you unto the end of the
world (Matthew 28:20). That is to say, if they (specifically the Jews and Gentiles) had held fast to his teachings, then would the same blessings and bounties have been in Christianity in our day, as earlier. But the beast promised to [wage] war on the saints and overcome them and therefore was given power over all kindreds, tongues, and nations (Revelation 13:7). That is to say that the true Church of Jesus Christ was destroyed.

After children are confirmed, and they have obeyed this royal command, then their sins are forgiven them—as with all others—with the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, which Jesus instituted for the remembrance of his body and blood. When Jesus said, “This is my body which is given for you,” he also said, “this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). He, without doubt, meant his body, or himself. For, if the bread and wine had been for the forgiveness of sins, then Jesus would not have needed to suffer death. For, this is to prefigure; for all know that it is not the Master’s flesh and blood which they receive. As well might Moses have said that offerings and sacrifices in olden times were the body and blood of Jesus. Or that the fiery serpent was Jesus Christ which was a symbol of Jesus Christ—or that great offering—just as the Lord’s Supper was to remind, but not to forgive sins. But this is an abominable distortion and [is] backwards. Jesus said: My blood is shed for the forgiveness of sins, for many. So it was not bread and wine. You say: It is real flesh and blood. But I say the tasting of bread and wine causes this in no way; that is, the forgiveness of sins.

Many have, without doubt, thought to ask as Pilate, what is truth? Bread and wine are symbolic representations of his body and blood. Symbolic representations of that new covenant of peace—or the New Testament—which are the laws and regulations which he gave his apostles.
The Old Testament is those laws and contracts for peace which God gave Moses and was a great prefiguration of the Savior. But Jesus was not come to destroy the law, but to perfect and fulfill it. He did not destroy the ten commandments but perfected the prophets who had spoken of him.

Though sacrifices in Moses's day were for the remission of sins and were a prefiguration of Christ, we have no right to employ the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for that purpose. Is this not treating the blood of the covenant as common—or useless? Is it not the blood of Jesus which cleanses us of all sin? [Yes], by obeying those first laws, which are faith, conversion, and baptism, which are the only remission-of-sins remedies, with the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

The saints came together often in the days of the apostles to partake of the bread and water, [but] not for the forgiveness of sins. For the apostle Paul says: As often as ye eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians 11:26). Jesus says: Do this in remembrance of me. He says in another place: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Without being born anew of water and spirit ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God. It is not [simply] each who receives bread and wine in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus who will be saved, or enter into the kingdom of God. Well has Viddalin said: Thus do men bring this blind currency before the altar of the Master to eat and drink judgment unto themselves. But people don't know any better; they are taught it. And therefore they have an excuse before God until they hear the truth. Paul says: And God was patient at this time of ignorance, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). And the same may be said of today. God has again given the same gospel to the earth which we find in the holy scriptures. You say: That is correct,
that all of God’s wishes which human beings obey are found in the Bible and are therefore called the word of God. Baptizing little children, confirmation, the Lord’s Supper being used for the forgiveness of sins, cannot be the will of God as men obey it, for there is no command or example in passages of holy scripture to establish these doctrines of men. When the scriptures teach us perfectly and clearly all that we need to know for our true welfare, then you ought not to have other teachings than those the scriptures teach. He who believes or teaches differently than the word of God requires, he it is who profanes the name of God.

The apostle says: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Jesus said: Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up (Matthew 15:13). That is to say, that these teachings which cannot be found in the Bible are plants which shall be pulled up by the roots. It is these superstitions which the apostle speaks of. And the so-called Christian has thus, with his personal views, destroyed the laws of God. “This people [. . .] honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8–9). If the worship of God was in vain in the olden days by teaching the commandments of men, so it may be the same in these days, for God is the same yesterday and today, and [is] unchangeable and constant.

After the person has obeyed these doctrines of men, they are then compelled to swear oaths in matters and according to regulations, even if they are disinclined. But Jesus said: You should never swear, but let your communication be, yea, yea;
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Matthew 5:37). And the apostle James says: But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation (James 5:12). They who are doctors of theology—can they not heal this? Can they not see this as a terrifying evil? Is not this one of the snares which the devil has inspired evil and foolish men to lay for hardened and unprincipled human beings to imprison them in the net of damnation. Multitudes of people have been destroyed in this fashion and are eternally lost. Is not this spoiling the message of Jesus and forcing people, like the pope and that Roman power, to break God’s commands and commandments? “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

The so-called Christian admits to the ten commandments being from God, though Sundays are sold, two hours excepting. It was the word of God that sanctified the Sabbath day and not Sabbath day services.

Some who labor on the Sabbath day wish to justify themselves by saying that God has not insisted on Sunday. Then they ought to keep holy Saturday, the seventh day of the week which God himself established among the people of Israel, if they want to have a day of rest. Sunday, or the first day of the week, is established and accepted by Christians as a day of rest and of the Sabbath. Jesus rose up on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week, then, the apostles were gathered together to break bread. Paul spoke to them, for he planned to leave the next morning, and he stretched out the talk until midnight (Acts 20:7). This was the day of gathering—or of the Sabbath—for the saints. Jesus said that he is the Lord of the Sabbath day.
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He was with his apostles for forty days after his Resurrection and taught them those things that pertained to the kingdom of God. Jesus ascended to heaven on the fifth day and on the tenth day—which was another Sunday from then [on]—the Comforter, that Holy Spirit, came upon the apostles (Acts 2).

I said that Sundays were sold, excepting two hours, and we see that such is the case. One little part remains of the holy day of rest and the Sabbath. Does not this resemble that which the pope did, selling forgiveness-of-sins letters? Only those who have purchased these empty promise letters know whether or not the legal authorities give out forgiveness-of-sins letters, for if they need to pay both in this and the life to come, then would it clearly become too expensive. For I am certain that this sin is not atoned for before God by purchasing these empty promises. It is written, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). And in another place, “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19). “I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them” (Ezekiel 20:12). “But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass,” and so on (Deuteronomy 5:14). This is the will of God which humans understand, completely and clearly by reading in the scriptures, which is acknowledged of those so-called Christian through words, but not through deeds. But faith without works is dead (James 2:20).

But now let us examine the officials from the Lutheran church and compare them with officials in the first Christian
church. In the so-called Christian church, the highest person, so to speak, is, first, the pope, then cardinals, archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, and priests. In the Church of Jesus Christ, first apostles, next prophets, then teachers, then those who do miracles, next those who have gifts to heal, lead, and speak a diversity of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28). In another place: The same has made some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors, and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ—namely his Church. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:11–15). This shows that all these were necessary and indispensable to the leaders in the first Christian church. If Christians have not come to a unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, then these leaders—namely, apostles and prophets—are necessary unto the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ, to no longer be children tossed about by the false commands of men or winds of doctrine, their craftiness or cunning, their shrewd deceptions.

For the body is only one body though it has many parts. That is, the true and correct Church and faith is one, though it has many leaders and members. But all these limbs of this one body—which are many—are one body, just as all the leaders and members in the Church—which are many—are one Church. The eye may not say unto the hand, I have no need of thee, or the head unto the feet, I have no need of thee. The apostle cannot say to the missionary, I have no need of thee.
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The prophet cannot say to the evangelists and pastors, I have no need of thee. “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Corinthians 12:8–11).

The Spirit is given by the laying on of hands, but the Spirit gives different levels of gifts. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (1 Timothy 4:14). Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21). These gifts and religious officials, with all these laws and regulations, are marks, or signs, of the true Church of Jesus Christ.

The first limbs on this body (that is to say of the officials of the Church) are apostles and prophets, which we can call the mouth and eyes of the Church, or the body. The apostles were as the mouth of God to deliver his will to the people, and as his representatives to unloose and bind on earth. [They] had the Spirit of God to search into and know all things, even the hidden designs of God.

The prophets foresaw things that were to come. They saw the past and the present and the future and warned the people of God of his coming wrath and chastisements.

The so-called Christian church has never had eyes to see with and has wandered in darkness ever since the apostles and prophets were taken away; and the gift of the Holy Ghost and those first laws were no longer to be found. It had, rather, no mouth to speak of the hidden designs of God, and just as the
natural body could not live without a mouth through which all nourishment must pass, [the Church could not be nourished]. Neither can the body of Christ—or the Church—live without eyes and a mouth—that is—apostles and prophets, which have the holy priesthood and power to give the Holy Ghost. Your church has never had the natural movements of life and the glorious gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is dead and does not have the most necessary sensory organ, or the before mentioned religious officials [or representatives].

One of the spiritual gifts was healing the sick. “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him (James 5:14–15). These were the laws among the saints in those days. But if someone is sick among the so-called Christians today, they send for the doctors, which give them poison-blended medicines in their own names. Dear reader, there are none of Jesus’s teachings that are taught in the same way or with the same meaning as we read it in the scriptures. Those who do not acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit, the officials, and those first commands and commandments as being necessary today, just as in the first Christian church, those have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.

Paul says, “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). This shows that we cannot take part in Christ’s service unless we hold fast to those first principles of the faith or those apostolic teachings. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10). Jesus said unto John, “But that which ye have already hold fast till I come”
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(Revelation 2:25). “[He who] abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 1:9).

Fourth Chapter

Concerning the Apostasy and those false teachers, and how God gave the holy priesthood

Let us now say a few words about the Apostasy and those false teachings. “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant” (Isaiah 24:5). “And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him” (Isaiah 24:2). When men break the new and everlasting covenant and the commandments of God, then it shall be the same with people as with the priest. All have gone astray from the truth, and if the blind leads the blind, both fall into the pit. “The heads [of Zion] judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest” (Micah 3:11–12).

If God punished the Jews thus in olden times for altering his commands and confusing the scriptures, and the priests taught for hire and the prophets divined for money, then it is likely that he does the same today, after the people have been
warned. It will be proven true which the apostle [Peter] says: For if God has not spared the natural branches (meaning the Jews), then it is likely that he will not spare the modern-day Christian or those who have altered the commandments and sell their knowledge for money, just as others were [not spared].

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2 Peter 2:1–3). These doctrines of men are the deceiving teachings which are sold for a price. “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. . . . But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:11, 13). But endure in what? In the superstitious and deceptive rules of men? No, rather in the apostolic doctrines. “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30). The apostle [Paul] calls them grievous wolves which arise with perverse doctrines. He is speaking of the Apostasy and those false teachers to come in the later centuries.

When the apostle is speaking about the dreadful day of the Lord, he says, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of
God, shewing himself that he is God. . . . And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:1–4, 6–8). This is to say that the Catholic church—and the pope—which is the largest religious organization in the world, it is he who the Lord Jesus will destroy and bring to nought with the brightness of his coming. Yea, with the spirit of his mouth, with the bitterness of the sword of truth and his holy words will he bring them to nought. The apostle says: They have destroyed his apostles and church and broken the new and everlasting covenant. He says in the same chapter and in the fifteenth verse, Brethren stand therefore firm and hold fast to those doctrines which ye have received, whether by our teaching or by letter. None ought to call themselves Christian who has other doctrines than this. “From which some having swerved (says the apostle) have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:6–7). “Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake” (Titus 1:11). “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:15–16). If they teach the commandments of men for a price, or teach that which they ought not for filthy lucre's sake, as the apostle says, then might ye know them by their fruits. It should be easy to tell which is which. [The ravening wolves] are all those religious groups' teachers who don't have the doctrines of the apostles.
Jesus said to his apostles when he sent them out to preach, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Paul therefore says, “These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me” (Acts 20:34). He says in another place, “For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you” (2 Thessalonians 3:7–8). If it is true that all of God’s will, which human beings concern themselves with, can be found in the Bible, then it teaches perfectly and clearly how those false teachers would come, as well as about the Apostasy. And though the apostle be resurrected, he couldn’t put it any better. If you, dear reader, want to know more about the Apostasy, read 2 Timothy 3–15; Titus 1:15–16; Revelation 13:1–8; 17:1–6.

But where have the modern-day teachers received their priesthood and authority to preach their doctrine which they themselves have invented? When God has needed an instrument to send out his will, then he has revealed it unto his servants, the prophets, and unto them whom he has called. He called Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, with revelation to spread his will and wisdom-filled direction. Moses and Aaron were called to the priesthood by the Great Jehovah; the seventy elders, by revelation to help Moses. Joshua was called by the word of the Lord—through Moses—to lead Israel; the judges, by visions, revelations, angels, and inspiration of the Holy Ghost; Samuel, by the voice of God. And all the prophets by the word of God. Men were called in a similar fashion, all until the last, Malachi, in the first Church.

John the Baptist was called before he was born by the spirit of prophecy by an angel of God who appeared to his father, Zachariah (Luke 1:11–18). Jesus was chosen by God to be a...
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high priest. As it is written, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 5:6). Paul calls him “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Hebrews 3:1). It is very meaningful that Jesus had received the priesthood when he was transfigured on the mountain and Moses and Elias appeared to him.

Jesus, who was an apostle and high priest, chose the twelve apostles and said unto them: I have chosen you. When Judas fell, the apostles chose two men, Barsabas and Matthias, and prayed to the Lord to show which of them should be chosen. And the lot fell upon Matthias (Acts 1:23–26). After that, the Lord chose other seventy and sent them out (Luke 10:1). Paul and Barnabas were both apostles (Acts 14:14). They were selected unto the authoritative service by a new revelation, by [the] inspiration of God’s Spirit, by prophets and learned men who were among the saints in Antioch (Acts 13:1–4). That the elders were called by revelation is apparent from that which Paul says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Acts 20:28). Timothy, the first bishop in Ephesus, was selected by prophecy and the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14). Titus, the first bishop among the Greeks in Crete, was commanded of Paul to ordain elders in all places that the saints were (Titus 1:5–9). Therefore, says the apostle, “But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches” (1 Corinthians 7:17). “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). This shows clearly that all the representatives (or apostles) of the Church of God must be called of God. For none can take this honour unto himself (namely the priesthood) except he be chosen by God.
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

But where have the modern-day teachers received their priesthood? From the pope? No. [For] he is without any authority [and without] apostles and prophets and has no gifts of the Spirit or any semblance of the Church of Christ. Where have the many Protestant (and other various religious groups’) teachers received their authority? The echo cries out where, but then does there come no reply? Yes. They are all called of men to preach the commandments and superstitions of men, which I have seen and proven by the scriptures. Such is their worship of God—vain and useless. For they teach the commandments of men which they themselves have been taught.

It is shouted among the people, that the Mormon faith is the worst in the world, without having any fundamental reasons or proofs from holy writ to confirm [such a claim]. Solomon says: He who judges before he knows is not wise.

If the Mormon faith is foolishness and error, then the priests and powerful teachers ought to show and confirm it by the word of God and the scriptures. Do they do it? No. But they allow the lying and fearful attacks of anger thunder in all directions. This is the only remedy they have to protect themselves, and thereby scare the people from hearing and examining our doctrines. They don't want the Mormons to speak or preach so that the shame of their nakedness be not revealed by presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ and the apostolic doctrine. They would rather lose their reward because of their nonsensical and deceptive teachings, [of] which the apostle says: Therefore do they hold fast to the lies, just as the Jews in former days.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the men of the guard were paid to lie to hinder the work of God. So it is with the true gospel today. Jesus says, “For [the devil] is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). First, he is the father of lies. Then, the lie is
his daughter, and she has done harm to all, both spiritual and physical.

Priests give talks and sermons and have as their subjects, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11). God’s Spirit, in place of Jesus’s words, told John what he ought to write to the congregations, which meant those first (and all those) commandments and rules of the Church of Christ that they ought to hold fast. This cannot mean the disgraceful commandments of men which were instituted some centuries later—the same which is now taught by the so-called Christian faiths. John and the saints could not hold fast to that which did not exist and to that which no one knew of in their day. But [this] is enough to say unto all those who allow others to think and speak for them and who are blinded by customs and habits.

This shows clearly that if the saints had allowed themselves to be deceived away from the doctrines of the apostles, then they have lost their crown, that is, their exaltation and salvation in the kingdom of God; so all who do not have the apostolic doctrines have no crown to hope for, and can therefore lose nothing. If they say, “Hold fast unto nonsense and the doctrines of men” so that the priests don’t lose their parishioners and their income, then they are saying what they truly mean. It is possible to know the true and correct faith from the wrong if we believe the word of God which we have in holy scripture. For God’s word brings sight and proof [of] what we are allowed or banned [from doing]. It is our leading light.

Dear reader, was it the doctrine of Jesus Christ that the apostles taught? Was [the doctrine] necessary and the only way to salvation? [Were] faith, repentance, and baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins, and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost [necessary]? Apostles, prophets, and all
the glorious blessings and signs, which were found in the first Church, were they necessary or were they not? If you confess them to being necessary, then I must ask, “Why do you not have such now?” If you do not confess that such is necessary, what are you then? Are you not a religious villain and a heretic and not better than the heathen? Or the New Testament lies and means all together something else than it says, and it is then not holy. Or is it not clear to understand that you—and the so-called Christian—have strayed so long from the path of truth and are become blind so that you view nothing else as necessary except reading the Lord’s Prayer and calling Lord, Lord. But everything else which Jesus taught and instituted [is considered] to be unnecessary. And that which men have instituted will suffice in place of the commands and doctrines of Jesus, which are now set aside. Jesus says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

The apostle exhorts the saints to hold fast unto those doctrines which he taught, where he says, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:3). In another place, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8–9). He repeats these words and says, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11–12). Those blessings which belong to the Church of Jesus
Christ, in this life, are wisdom, knowledge, joy, the gift of healing, miracles, the gift of tongues and the interpretation of such, revelations, visions and dreams, the ministry of angels, the gift of prophecy, the casting out of devils, and all others which are spoken of in the scriptures—or the New Testament. These signs shall follow them that believe (see Mark 16:17–18). Those who believed in the apostolic doctrines and accepted them, believed this. For, wherever the holy priesthood and authority of God are, these signs will be found. But wherever they are not, the Church of God is not. No one need be unsure about whether or not he is in the Church of Christ. For these signs show and confirm it perfectly. For the natural, great and eternal law is that the same causes and reasons have the same consequences and results. By your fruits ye shall know them.

And so it is with the Church of Jesus Christ. If these signs have not sufficiently shown themselves among the Latter-day Saints—which the world calls Mormons—then so many thousands would not have—of all nations and tongues—received our doctrines. The apostle says: Seek after spiritual gifts, but above all else, the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1). But you deny all those spiritual gifts, just as all others who were in the first Christian faith.

Jesus says: The word which I spoke will judge them at the last day. [Those words] are the laws and doctrines which he gave when he dwelt with us here in the flesh. They [the words] will judge all who don’t want to believe and obey them, after having been given them (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12). [They are] the same today as yesterday. God’s word is the truth. It is the sharp, two-edged sword which went out of his mouth (Revelation 1:16). It will put to death, with the second death, all those who have not repented after having known his will and the path which leads to his kingdom.
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

I have now shown what the gospel of Jesus Christ is—or that apostolic doctrine—and compared it with today’s teachings, creeds, and customs which men have invented which is clearly shown and proven from the scriptures. I have done the same with the Apostasy and those false teachers, and the mark [they have made], and how they are called of men to preach the doctrines and inventions of men. For no one who has his full senses will allow himself to consider that the 666 (more or less) different religious groups are [all] the true Christian faith and Church. For the apostle says, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5). This shows that there is not but one faith and baptism which are right or efficacious before God. Jesus says: the way is strait which leads to life and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13–14). If the 666 religions are [the] way unto life, then it would not prove true what Jesus says: The way is strait and few there be that find it. If they were born and raised in the way of life and taught the doctrines and commands of Jesus Christ, then they have found the right way. They all cry out and say: Here is the right way. Come. But Jesus says: If ye are not one, ye are not mine. Are these many religions one in faith, hope and charity? No. They contend one against another and find fault with one another’s creeds and faith. And therefore they cannot be the Church of Jesus Christ.

Some will say: I cannot bear looking at it in this way because it makes the whole of Christianity look immature and as charlatans, and it is true. But I say: It is better to know the truth in time to be able to repent, than to fall from the glorious throne of hope and joy in judgement down into the depths of damnation, which all must fall into who don’t obey the doctrines of Jesus Christ after having had a chance to hear it.

The learned who is proud and full of worldly knowledge, who is puffed-up by his learning, who makes himself drunk
upon worldly excesses, has locked himself out of heaven's doors, as well as all those who they have led astray from the way of truth by pointlessly worshiping God through the false teachings of men, which are in vain except to gather unto oneself wrath in the day of wrath. When and where has God recalled and made void the doctrines of the apostles? To whom has he revealed it and where is it written? If they don't show and prove it, they bear witness of themselves, who they are—the blind. Blind leaders, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. They pretend to be learned in the law, though they neither understand themselves what they are saying, nor that which they teach others (1 Timothy 1:7). It is written that they worship him in vain, by teaching the commandments of men, which they themselves had been taught (Matthew 15:8–9). All religions that don't have the apostolic doctrines do this. There are none who acknowledge its necessity, excepting the Latter-day Saints. One faith and one baptism, says the apostle.

Some sprinkle water over the one being baptized. Some only moisten the crown of the head or the forehead of young children to give them a name, and they call it baptism. But baptism means immersion, as before has been said, baptism by immersion, or being buried with Christ in baptism, foreshadowing the grave and death, as well as the death of the sins, to rise up out of the water and live anew, foreshadowing the resurrection and eternal life. This is the one “indulgence” remedy or sin-offering in connection with the suffering, pains, and death of Jesus Christ. He gave us these laws, as well as himself, and each is equally necessary and indispensable.

The so-called baptism for young children is one of those false commandments of men which has caused the nations to be heedless [of God] and has become a custom and a habit. It
was because of Adam's disobedience that all the earth became fallen. Sin, sorrow, difficulty, death, and all evil came into the world. It is through obedience to the doctrines of Jesus Christ, the apostolic doctrine—faith, repentance, and baptism by immersion of those who have authority from God—that sins are forgiven and God's Spirit is given by the laying on of hands, as has already been stated.

So as you can see, dear reader, all that was lost by disobedience has been returned by obedience to those fundamental teachings which have so often been spoken of. These four laws, or fundamental principles, are the doors to the Church and kingdom of God. Jesus says: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin if we obey these laws together with all others that he has commanded. The apostle says: “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). To be made partakers in the grace of Jesus we must hold fast unto the first principles of faith, which are the main principles of our faith, in Jesus Christ's true Church.

What then shall we do, dear reader? Shall we hold fast to the commands of men which we have been taught, which have no foundation in God's word and thereby make nothing of the words of Jesus and set aside the apostolic doctrines and trust in worldly wisdom unto salvation? No. “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5). Their hearts depart from the Lord who do not believe his words and those laws which he gave after having had a chance to hear the true gospel, which now is preached wide and far in the world.
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It would be good, dear reader, if you would build your faith on your own research as did they in Berea anciently (Acts 17:10–11). We need to search the scriptures to see whether or not that which we have been taught is right and ask God through his Spirit to understand correctly.

Fifth Chapter

The gospel in the last days, Joseph Smith being sent from God, the Book of Mormon, truth about the Godhead

But let us be mindful, dear reader, of how the gospel should be preached in the last days. When John the apostle was on the isle of Patmos, the angel told him he would show him that which would later come to pass (Revelation 1:1; 4:1). One of the glorious things that he saw was an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel unto them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, tongue, and people. He called out with a loud voice and said: Fear God and give glory unto him for the time of his judgement is come (Revelation 14:6–7). This is spoken in clear words and not as a parable. Jesus came with the true gospel when he came to dwell here on earth. But thereafter an angel should come with it. And this should be in the last days. For the angel says: The time of God's judgment is come. But if the true gospel—that Jesus came with and that he taught and preached—had been on the earth, then God would not have needed to send it to the earth. For the gospel which the angel came with shall be sent to all nations, tongues, and people. Thereafter shall another angel cry out that Babylon is fallen and become the habitation of devils and the prison for all kinds of abominable spirits. “For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the
Babylon means godlessness and discord. The wine of her fornication means the sins, the damage caused by false faiths and the commands of men, through which all nations have become drunk and which kings and leaders have established.

But before Babylon is destroyed, the people of God are called out from her. “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). So there will be a gathering together of the people of God at that time, as the angel comes with the eternal gospel.

Jesus said, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (see Matthew 24:14).

And it will be a symbol of his coming and of the end of the world. So when the angel comes with the everlasting gospel—if it is the same as Jesus taught—then all may know that it is the same as John saw and the same [gospel], about which Jesus said it would be a testimony of his coming. For the gospel which Jesus taught has not been openly taught in its fulness in 1,700 years even if the Church of God was not fully taken from the earth and the saints [were] not in all ways destroyed before the sixth century, as has been stated.

Was Joseph Smith sent from God? [That] is one question which all ought to know and to be in a position to prove or stand against with facts and perfect reasoning. He says that one angel from God has revealed himself and given [the gospel] to his emissary in its fulness and the message to all nations and tongues, to follow it in the same way that Jesus taught it, and we read it in the New Testament. How could Joseph Smith—if he was a heretic and a false teacher—bring forth the true gospel? Was he wiser than all the heretics and founders of religious
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groups for the last 1,700 years? And being uneducated, could not Svedenborg, Irving, Vestle, Calvin, Hvitfield, Luther, and many others come forth with the true gospel? No. Why not? There was one angel who would come with it to the earth, and the time had not come yet.

So there are two great proofs Joseph Smith was sent from God. First, that an angel revealed the gospel in its fulness to him. Second, that it was the same as Jesus taught. He was also [commanded] by the angel to gather together all who received this message, which is the third proof that he was sent from God.

Come out of the city, my people. That is, out of the false denominations. The gathering of Israel in the last days is so clearly discussed by the prophets (see Isaiah 11:11–16; Jeremiah 16:14–17; 31:8–11; Ezekiel 20:34–35).

The apostle Paul says, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25). In the scriptures, “Gentiles” refers to all those who are not of the house of Israel. The Jews, to some degree, have experienced a blindness, until the fulness of the Gentiles—or the gathering—be come in. What blindness have the Jews experienced? Namely, not believing in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world and the building up of old Jerusalem, which they will do in the last days (see Zechariah 12–14). This will happen through all the prophets, both great and small. But before this happens, the Gentiles will gather together.

Thirty-eight years have passed since they began to gather together under the name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from all nations, tongues, and corners of the earth. And it is they who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ which the angel brought to Joseph Smith, according to
that which David says, “to loose those that are appointed to death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord” (Psalm 102:20–22). The people and the kingdoms should come together to serve the Lord. And this is the second reason; therefore, they were called out from Babylon, to loose the children of death. David says: If they had received the plagues of Babylon, then they were the children of death. But he says to release them, so they might live and serve the Lord. And therefore they were called out of Babylon. It is an ungodly world.

Fifty years have passed since the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was given to Joseph Smith and [since] he was tutored by the angel of God concerning the holy history—or record—which the Book of Mormon is translated from, which contains the gospel of Jesus Christ, as can be read in the New Testament. And in the same manner [it contains] a history of the ancient Jaredites, who fled to that westerly continent—namely America—approximately 1,867 years after the creation of the earth. [It] also [contains a record] of the ancient Israelites who came from Jerusalem six hundred years before the birth of Christ.

People think this is a great, wondrous event. It is something that the greater part of human beings did not expect, something that our forefathers had no idea concerning—that God would send an angel from the heavens. What? An angel from the heavens in the last days! Yes, even though the people consider it a wondrous event. How unlike our forefathers’ opinions over the last 1,700 years.

If people today are told that God has sent an angel and revealed his will to man, they are quickly willing to make light of and disdain it. They have already settled on the opinion in
their hearts that angels will no longer serve man, and that no additional messages from the heavens would be sent; that no voice from God would again be heard speaking to man on the earth; that no additional revelations would be given; [and that there would be] no more prophets, seers, or revelators to share with and reveal God’s will to the people. Such were our forefathers’ opinions. Such are the views which the two to three hundred million beings espouse who call themselves Christians. Talk to them yourselves today and tell them that more of the word of God has been found which has been given to man, and the general outcry from the Christian nations will be, “Our books of canon are perfect.” Who told them that? Where have they received such information? Did God reveal it to them sometime? No. Is this not the fruit of their own imagination? Have you heard any man, yea even the most learned and wisest among them confirm this out of the Bible? Have you heard that any preacher or priest has proven this to be the consensus and the rationale? Never. No man shall find such no matter how learned or educated he is in the holy writings, or who can come forth with any proof to confirm this opinion.

The Latter-day Saints first came forward forty-eight years ago and bore witness that God had sent an angel from the heavens, however amazing it seemed to the people, however unusual an event for the time. They say, though, when Jesus Christ’s true Church was on the earth, angels were sending out a part of the blessing which he gave his people, but now we don’t need such things. Why not? Because we are so enlightened. We have read the scriptures and know so perfectly their contents [that] we need no further guidance from the Almighty. We don’t need prophets in our day to tell us what will happen. We don’t need revelation as a method to know the word of God and the truth, for we are so enlightened. The light
of the gospel shines so brightly before us that we can get by with human knowledge without revelation from the heavens. This is their opinion.

Let us now leave the holy scriptures and see whether or not their contents confirm the angel’s message or not. History teaches us that before the flood, angels spoke to the people, just as one man speaks to another, so that Abraham and Enoch and many others spoke with God. After the flood we find that God gave great and glorious promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—promises concerning heavenly and earthly things. And these men were “God’s friends” and were perfect in their time. Angels came to them and enlightened them about the words of eternal life. They had revelations and enjoyed God’s goodness.

And so, too, we can follow Moses and the children of Israel in the land of Egypt through time. Did the Lord bless them? Yes, he did. In what way? By speaking to them and by sending angels to minister among them and by giving revelations. While the children of Israel traveled in the wilderness, they were taught by revelations concerning all their ceremonies. And through revelation they raised a sanctuary in the wilderness, so that when the Lord said unto them to put up their tents in one place they remained there until another revelation was given. Angels enlightened them concerning God’s will after they had arrived in the land of Canaan. Thus, God continued to send angels to his people; one prophet came after another among them to reveal God’s will.

Such was the way of things among them until some time before the birth of Christ. Then came a time when no angel was sent, no revelation, no prophet like before. Why? Because of the wickedness of the people. And the consequence was such that when the Savior came and preached the gospel unto
them, they were so wicked that they stained their hands with his blood.

We find further that after Jesus had established his Church, in that day, that angels were sent to reveal God’s will. And one of the apostles exhorted the saints to be hospitable in the process, for in that way some had unknowingly entertained angels. We find that in the first hundred years of the Christian church angels were often sent to the saints and revelations were given to direct the church by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, which rested upon the apostles. Paul speaks about the angels and says, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). This is a clear proof that these holy and glorious beings from the heavens—they who lived in the presence of God—were sent as fully commissioned servants of God to those who lived on the earth and who ought to inherit salvation. But after the first hundred years had passed, the heavens again began, little by little, to close over their heads. The power of the Holy Ghost stopped working among the people, and the ministration of angels was no more. Neither visions nor revelations, but darkness shall fall upon them as a consequence of their disbelief and Apostasy from the teachings of Jesus Christ. Their understanding became darkened so that they could no longer view the glorious future.

The age-old condition existed, up until about fifty years ago, that the priests—which the people had deemed as spiritually enlightened and wise—have all held that the Bible was perfect, that their canonical books were enough, that it wasn’t necessary for angels to speak again to men, and that the gifts and blessings which can be found in the Church in earlier days [need not] continue today. The people have been comfortable with this truth, even if there was not the least proof or evidence
that it was so. And this has been propagated as the accepted view and tradition which has nothing to support it.

But the long silence has been broken. The voice of angels has again sounded to mortal man on earth, and this in fulfillment of the prophecy that John gave while in exile on the isle of Patmos. The Lord showed him in a vision what events would occur on the earth, among other things, and after a specific time period, the heavenly gospel [would be returned] to the inhabitants of the earth. In the fourteenth chapter [of Revelation] we are enlightened as to how this would occur. John says, “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Revelation 14:6–7). However wondrous this may seem, it is an angel that is spoken of, who comes to the earth with the eternal gospel. And God has given authority to man to preach it before all nations and people. And this same gospel has been preached now for fifty years, unto many nations and people, so that all would be given the opportunity to hear the message of freedom and warning.

But you will say, “This is only your belief. You say that an angel has come, but we know not whether it is true. You say that he has come with the eternal gospel, but we know nothing of this. What proof can you give us so we can be assured of this, that an angel from heaven has come with this message?”

I will tell you how you can know for a surety, how all who now live can know, whether or not the godly message, namely, the eternal gospel, has been sent by an angel to the inhabitants of the earth. Do the will of your Heavenly Father, call on his
name and pray unto him, saying in your hearts, “O, Lord, hast thou verily sent thine angel from the heavens with the everlasting gospel to the inhabitants of the earth? Hast thou commanded him to preach unto all people, nations, and tongues under the heavens?” And if you do this with a sincere heart, you will receive an assurance for yourselves.

Perhaps some will say, “What? Will God give us wisdom in our day by calling on his name in prayer?” Why not? Has not Jesus himself said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering (James 1:5–6). Has not God, from the earliest times, revealed knowledge of the truth to his children? Assuredly he has done so. The same God who directed his people in olden times wants also to give you knowledge if you will pray to him concerning such and commit to doing his will.

Some will perhaps say, “For the purpose of being able to turn ourselves with such questions to the Lord, it would be good if we could receive such a strong witness that it would encourage us to do such.” I don’t know how much you require; for as outward evidences were concerned, God gave enough of them before his Church was established. He did not allow the Book of Mormon to be sent unto the nations to be declared before all people before he had given a testimony to certain witnesses. How many? First, four men: the translator of the book, Joseph Smith; Martin Harris; Oliver Cowdery; David Whitmer. We have here four witnesses. What does Jesus say? With two or three witnesses shall all things be established (2 Corinthians 13:1).
But you ask, “Is it not possible that these four witnesses are mistaken?” Let us consider their testimony and see whether such is possible.

Joseph Smith, one of these witnesses, says that an angel came down from the heavens, whose face shown like a light, and the glory of God surrounded him. And this angel commanded him to travel to a hill called Cumorah, not far from his father’s house in the town Manchester, Wayne County, in the place New York. There he would find the ancient records, plates of gold, containing the everlasting gospel as it was taught anciently to the inhabitants of this land (namely, America). He obeyed his command and went to this place and found the records in the same place that he was told to look by the angel in the revelation. Was it possible that Joseph was deceived? The angel told him also that with these plates was an “instrument,” or tool, called the Urim and Thummim, with which he would be able to translate these records into the English language.

Perhaps some will say that Joseph Smith was uneducated and could not have translated the Egyptian writings and language which the most learned could not translate, and that is true. He could not have done it had not God given him the holy tools, the Urim and Thummim! And if you wish to ask what it is, it is the holy tool which the Lord has possessed to reveal his will to his servants and which listens to the holy priesthood, and he gave an answer to these things (see Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8, where it is called “the light and the truth”; Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 28:6; Ezra 2:62–63). This holy tool was given to Joseph Smith to translate the writings that were on the plates, but this is mocked and belittled by modern teachers and the so-called Christians. They compare it to a telescope or magnifying glass or some such [thing], but they may as well mock God who has made holy and [has] prepared this tool.
Joseph Smith was fifteen years old when he received the first revelation and God called him by an angel. You would perhaps dispute this, dear reader, and say that it is unbelievable that God should call so young a man (or boy) to erect his Church. But it is no more strange than when he called David—who was a shepherd boy—to be king over all Israel; or Samuel, who was a servant boy in the Lord's house under the care of the priest Eli; or when he called Jeremiah, who excused himself because of his youth from spreading God's errand and being the prophet of the nations (Jeremiah 1:6). (There are many [other examples] that show this.)

Let us now refer back to Joseph Smith. He perfected the translation from the year 1827 to 1830 by employing that holy tool, the Urim and Thummim. Could he be deceived when he had the plates in his own hands with the greatest gift of sight being used to ponder over the wondrous text that was on them? Any man with his reason intact can see that under such circumstances it would be impossible to be deceived, but instead know that the witness is true, and the message, of God.

Now with regard to the other three witnesses. They witness that, in the year 1829, after the plates were translated, an angel of God showed himself unto them clothed in light and glory and held the plates in his hands, and turned the pages one by one, and showed them the writings which were thereon. And they witness further that while they pondered over this glorious thing, they heard a voice from the heavens which said that the writing on the plates had been correctly translated by the gift and power of God, and that they should bear testimony of what they saw and heard.

Allow me to ask, was it possible that they could have been deceived? We could say as well that all they in earlier days who said they had seen angels have been deceived. But I cannot see
how anything could be more true and reliable. The promise was brought forth that three witnesses should come forth to bear witness of these things. The Lord, in reality, sent his angel. They saw him come down from the heavens. They saw the light and the glory which shown from his face. They saw the plates in his hands and could understand the writing which was on them. And they heard the Lord’s voice commanding them to bear witness before all people concerning all they had seen and heard. To have been deceived under such circumstances is impossible.

Here are the four witnesses, who all bear witness of the divinity of this work, as I too have claimed. Jesus says out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall all things be established. Therefore the Lord did not establish his Church before he had given enough proofs to the men he had chosen to bear witness of the truth.

Joseph Smith was further commanded of the Lord to show these plates to eight other men—besides those already mentioned—who were also witnesses to these things. And their revealed testimony is that they saw the plates and touched them, and they saw the curious writing which was on them. Even though some of them have fallen away and are removed from association with the Latter-day Saints, not even one of them denied the testimony which he had borne concerning this.

Here are twelve witnesses. Are they not enough proof to bring peace to all men whose hearts are humble before God?

But I would direct you to even greater witnesses. When this book (namely, the Book of Mormon) was published, the Lord called these men to go out among the people to preach the gospel which they had received, promising them that all they who would show obedience to it should receive the Holy Ghost and he should confirm the testimony of the believer.
And when the Holy Ghost came upon people, they received a witness for themselves that these men were the living servants of God. And the power that rested upon them was the Holy Ghost of whom they have read in the scriptures. But how did they know this? Because the Holy Ghost shared with them marvelous gifts. He gave them power to lay hands upon those who were sick and to [cast out] evil in the name of Jesus. And the sick were made immediately well.

Perhaps some will say that positive thinking had the most to do with it. The ill person had imagined to themselves that they were better. But I bear testimony before you in the name of the Lord that young babies—who can’t engage in positive thinking—are healed in the same way and by the same power, which is the power of the Almighty God displayed through his servants. The servants of God in this way have been in a position to convince the people and lead them unto a knowledge of the truth. And those who have taken our faith can of themselves bear witness of the divine truths. They have received a sure knowledge by the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of God’s mysteries. Thus people have received a knowledge of these things, which they bear testimony of, and this testimony is in power before the whole world whether each human being will accept it or not.

I have now laid before you proofs which are enough to awaken the belief in your hearts. It is the testimony of twelve men, [aside from that] of many thousands of men and women, who have received the Holy Ghost which gives them knowledge of this latter-day work and power to witness of its truths. And the testimony of these people speaks with a loud voice to the nations that God has spoken from the heavens and sent an angel to the earth with the everlasting gospel.
If the powerful testimonies of these twelve men—in conjunction with a great multitude of men and women—is not enough to awaken a belief in you hearts that God has verily begun his great and unique work in our day, what then can awaken the people to a knowledge of these things? There can be no excuse for them that hear and reject these testimonies of elders. They have lifted up their voice for many years, which can have a striking effect on the hearts of all honorable men. For the promise is that if you have faith to call on the Lord in prayer, you shall receive a witness for yourselves; yea, you will receive an assurance in your hearts that the Lord has assuredly come to the earth by his angel in these last days, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, and our doctrine is not of men, rather of God and will become a sweet savour of life unto life for all who receive it, but the savour of death unto death for those who reject it (1 Corinthians 2:15–16).

Therefore, as I said, one great, glorious, and joyous event has occurred in our day. The heavens are no longer closed; a prophet’s voice can again be heard among the people. The work and power of the Holy Ghost rests upon the servants of God, and his strength is made known among the various nations, as in days of old. The sick are healed, the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the Spirit of God is given unto the children of men, just as in the world in olden times.

Is this not enough to awaken those who have a humble heart before the Lord? If it is not enough, then I know nothing that can do it. Will it [be enough], through fulfillment of prophecy, when the Lord’s punishing hand shall fall upon the nations and his terrible anger be revealed to destroy all who are disobedient and ungodly? When none but the just be left on the earth, it will become a testimony which they cannot oppose, but such a testimony does not provide freedom in and
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of itself. It is the testimony of judgement which shall fall upon them at a time when they cry peace and security. Then swift destruction is at their door, and thus the scripture is exactly fulfilled which says, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37). When the unfortunate, disobedient, and godless people began to be destroyed in the flood, then they could say: We know that Noah was a prophet and that the message which he declared to our ears is from God. But it was too late. They rejected the message and treated it with disinterest and disdain. They did not want to call upon God with a sincere heart but chose, rather, to consider Noah a deceiver, and the consequence was such that they were destroyed by the great flood.

The reader will perhaps ask, “Do you have any proofs from the Bible or the prophecies to confirm this?” We answer that the proofs that God has given, namely, the testimony of twelve men, are great enough to convince any rational man or woman. In Noah’s day they had no books of the prophets to tell them of things in the future or of the great flood which should come. If they had, their condemnation would have been much greater. They had the testimony of no more than four men, nonetheless they were destroyed for their disbelief. How much more does the modern Christian need who already has these and other examples and prophecies, as well as the testimonies of twelve men to confirm the truth of God’s revelations.

The prophet Isaiah, in 29:1, speaks of distressing a nation—or Ariel—like Jerusalem. In the fourth verse he says, “And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust” (Isaiah 29:4). Here a nation is discussed that will be destroyed but will
Appendix B: A Voice of Warning and Truth

speak out of the ground. Her story—or record—was taken from out of the earth by Joseph Smith and is called the Book of Mormon after the last prophet, Mormon, who wrote most of their history which he gave to his son, Moroni, who wrote the end of the book.

This book speaks of people in America who were destroyed more than 1,400 years ago—or around four hundred years after Christ—because of their disbelief and godlessness. The wild Indians are their descendants. They are of the blood of Joseph who was sold into Egypt. This book also speaks of the destruction [in the Americas] when Jesus was crucified. And there was darkness as in the land of the Jews and earthquakes. So many places sank, and some were burned by fire from heaven. They had internal wars from the beginning, and the ungodly were destroyed with the judgement of the guilty suddenly, in a twinkling of an eye, as [it] says in (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Jesus, after his Resurrection, set up his Church in this land and chose twelve apostles. Therefore, said he unto the Jews, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring” (John 10:16). This didn’t mean the Gentiles, for they were not of Israel; for he said to the Canaanite woman, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). This meant the house of Joseph—or his sheep’s house—the ancestors of the Indians in America.

The prophet says in the eleventh verse [of Isaiah 29], “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.” Here is the voice that speaks from the earth, become a book. And the words of
this book are given to a learned man, which happened exactly when Martin Harris, Joseph Smith’s scribe, went with a sample of the letters that were on the plates to this famous man of languages in New York, Professor Anthon, who knew many languages both new and old. But it was sealed and hidden from him. But the Lord says that this people—meaning those who live on the earth when the book was given—draw near unto me with their mouth but their hearts are far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men, in all ways the same as it stands today among the nations, in spiritual things and matters of faith. The fourteenth verse [of Isaiah 29 says,] “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” The wisdom of Anthon perishes, and his understanding is hidden.

But God raised up his servant, Joseph, and sent angels unto him, gave him the Urim and Thummim to begin this great, latter-day work. The eighteenth verse [says,] “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” This is perfectly fulfilled, both spiritually and physically. There are many thousands of our people who are witnesses thereto and know that the blind have seen, the deaf have heard, the lame have walked by anointing them with holy oil in the name of Jesus, by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the elders who have full power from God for such—it is the holy priesthood—and there are many who are not of our faith or church who know that this is true and are eyewitnesses thereto and have given their written testimonies to confirm these things. Again in the nineteenth verse: “The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

in the Holy One of Israel.” The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord when they hear the everlasting gospel message and see that the blessings and bounties which were before in God’s Church are again brought to the earth according to the prophecies and promises. And then the poor of the saints of the God of Israel rejoice. They have always been more receptive to the word of God than the rich. Jesus says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). He told John the Baptist that the poor received the gospel. They are humble and [are], as the Lord calls them, his sheep. They heard his voice and followed after him. It was they who knew that the kingdom of God was not to be found in food or drink or the physical sensations of this life, rather, in the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost. The meek and poor shall increase their joy when they hear the words of the book which speaks from the earth and which contains the same gospel we read about in the New Testament. David speaks of the same when he says, “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Psalm 85:11). The prophet Ezekiel says, “Thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions” (Ezekiel 37:16). This means the Jews, the Bible and the history of the house of Israel. “Take another stick, and write upon it” [v. 16]: This stick is for Joseph, which is to be understood for Ephraim and all the house of Israel, which means Ephraim and Manasseh, who were the sons of Joseph, and for their descendants. “Join them one to another into one stick,” the books, “and they shall become one in thine hand” [v. 17]. “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph,” meaning the Book of Mormon, “which [has been] in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows,” meaning Manasseh and his
descendants, “and will put them with . . . the stick of Judah,” meaning the Bible, “and make them one stick,” or book, “and they shall be one in mine hand” [v. 19]. (Read the blessing of Joseph in Genesis 49:22; Deuteronomy 33:13–18.) Joseph is a branch of a fertile bough, a branch of a fruitful tree by a spring; his branches grow up over the wall. His branches—that is, his children—grow over the wall, over the hard places and impediments and the great sea to the land of America, where they established themselves six hundred years before Christ’s birth.

Daniel, as well as Isaiah, speaks of the sealed book. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4). “And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (v. 9). Many have asked God for wisdom to examine the book and become more certain of the truth. He says further that none of the wicked will understand this but the religious—or the correctly religious—will understand it (see v. 10).

Habakkuk says the same as Daniel. “And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:2–4).

The Testimony of the Three Witnesses

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of
the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. [Amen.]

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris

In the same manner: The Testimony of the Eight Witnesses

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we
have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer, Hiram Page, Jacob Whitmer, Joseph Smith, Sen.,
Peter Whitmer, Jun., Hyrum Smith, John Whitmer, Samuel H. Smith

As many as have received this message with humility and a faithful heart are blessed with the signs which were before promised the faithful. And we can bear testimony that God is the same, the faith is the same, the gospel message is the same, and all gifts and blessings are the same. And the faithful receive these blessings now as in days of old.

Allow me to seriously ask you, dear reader, to put aside all your sins and humble yourself before your Father in Heaven and ask him if that which you have read is true. If you do this with humility and a pure heart the Lord will declare the truth by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Sixth Chapter

About revelation in the last days, the fulfillment of prophecy, the Jews’ and Gentiles’ condition and Apostasy, and Nebuchadnezzar’s dream

Dear reader, you will perhaps say, as it stands in the book of knowledge, though someone says that he has received a new divine revelation, we ought not to believe it, for God has nowhere promised to send new prophets to make declarations unto mankind. But that is not found in the Bible. It is as the
other false ideas and conjecture which they themselves have created. This deceived the evil ones in Noah's day and they did not believe the new revelation. Perhaps God has not promised to give revelation, or the people have been taught, as today, that they should believe none such. But Jesus says that it will be the same in the last days as it was in the days of Noah. That is, they will become evil and unbelieving. But “the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18). “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17; Joel 3:1–2). God said unto the prophet Joel: Your sons and daughters shall prophecy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. It is with prophecies and visions and dreams that God has revealed his will unto mankind. The revelations of John were visions. Nebuchadnezzar had dreams concerning the Lord’s kingdom unto the end of the world. The wise men and Joseph (of Egypt) had dreams. Joseph dreamed that the sun, moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. The prophets have already told us of the future and God’s will, for they have revealed it unto his servants the prophets. And [God] has promised to do the same in the last days. It was not the last days when Jesus established his Church, for those days were more than 1,800 years ago. But it shall happen in the last days, God says.

You say that no one should believe this and teach the people to reject the promise of God and say that he has not promised to send new prophets for the enlightenment of mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, that they become prophets and prophetesses in the last days. And they will prophesy
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with the spirit of God to bring forth the revelations. “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). Will not the scriptures, of necessity, be fulfilled and the prophecies come to pass which the men of God prophesied of the Holy Ghost?

But how should the prophecies be understood? All that is spoken in plainness [should be understood] as it is written. But that which is spoken by proverb or parable must be made plain, whether by visions, dreams, prophecies, or revelations. And as it is spoken by the Spirit of God, it ought also to be made plain by the same Spirit.

[In John's vision in Revelation,] the sea of glass before the throne means the new earth, this earth. She is redeemed then from the curse, and Satan is bound and all is as it was on the morning of the Creation when [the earth] was baptized—or cleansed—by fire. Then will God be her light, and she will no longer borrow her light from the sun for she will then be a sun and give light unto other globes.

The four animals that were full of eyes round about and within represent the animal kingdom. The eyes represent the light, wisdom, and knowledge which God has given them. The wings represent the power that they have to move and to act, the same with birds as with the fishes; all show and glorify the might and power of God night and day.

The twenty-four elders are holy men who were dead and were in the paradise of God (Revelation 4). The book with the seven seals represents seven thousand years—or ages of the earth—[and contains] the mysteries, will, and revelations of God concerning the earth and her inhabitants, which Jesus would proclaim and reveal. He broke the seals of the book and gave all access to his glory with his death and renewal if we obey the teachings which he gave and established in the
Church (Revelation 5). The little book which John ate, which was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly (10:10), represents the will and commands of God unto him, which he was pleased to perform and which were sweet unto his soul, but also represents the afflictions and tribulations of this life, which are bitter to pass through. The angel said unto him, “Thou must prophesy again before [many] peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (10:11). He was then very old, nearly 100, but we believe, as the disciples, that which Jesus said unto Peter: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die” (John 21:22–23). And in another place, “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark 9:1). Is this, then, not enough to show that John should live on until the Savior came [again]?

Some say that he is among the ten tribes, who fell from obedience in the time of Rehoboam and were captured by King Shalmaneser of Assyria and later taken away by the Lord’s hand, no one knows where. If this is not so, then where are those peoples, nations, and many kings which he will prophesy before? For the ten tribes will come forth in the last days with wonders and miracles, for so it is written. “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land” (Jeremiah 23:7–8). This clearly shows that it will be a much greater miracle when the Lord gathers Israel in the last days than when he parted the Red Sea
and led them from the land of Egypt. This doesn’t mean the Jews alone, but all of Israel, for so it is written in another place. “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them” (Micah 2:12–13). They shall live in their land, Palestine, the land of the Jews, to which the Jews are now gathering.

But the lost tribes shall come from the lands to the north, and the Lord shall be at the head of their hosts. Someone will have to break the gate before them—or lead them. If John will be alive till the Lord comes, then could he be this man? This we do not know. But there is one thing for sure, that they shall come from a northern land and the Lord will do wonders and miracles before them.

But now let us turn our attention to a number of the prophecies that have been literally fulfilled as they were spoken. Noah prophesied concerning the flood according to the Lord’s word. “And, behold . . . I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die” (Genesis 6:17). This occurred just as it was spoken. The truth was not made invalid, though no one wanted to believe it. “And he (the Lord) said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance” (Genesis 15:13–14). This occurred and did so precisely.
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

Moses was sent by God to free [the Jews] from the bondage of Pharaoh. If you don't remember, dear reader, how often the Lord punished and destroyed (more or less) his people Israel, as a whole nation, this was the first time, as the Lord said unto Abraham. The second was the king Shalmaneser of Assyria who took the ten tribes into prison and there they fell into disobedience during Rehoboam’s time (1 Kings 12). The third time was when Nebuchadnezzar nearly destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews and led them off into captivity for seventy years. The fourth time was when Antioch, king of the Greeks, took six hundred thousand Jews into slavery after they had returned from their Babylonian exile. The fifth time was when Titus destroyed Jerusalem, whose siege lasted 146 days, and 1,100,000 died in Jerusalem from hunger and by the sword. Ninety-five thousand were sold like sheep on the streets in Rome. Read Deuteronomy 28 and see what Moses told them [would happen] if they did not obey the word of the Lord, and you will admit that it has been fulfilled precisely.

The children of Israel have often been under the yoke of oppression, both to the Philistines and [to] other nations. In the same vein, Jesus said, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains,” and so on (Luke 21:20–21). And in another place, “There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2). When the Jews saw that the place would be overrun, they placed their silver and gold within the walls, which was discovered, and for this reason no stone was left upon another. Josephus, the historian, received permission by the Roman military commanders to take some of the writings out before they burned the temple.
Elias prophesied that it would not rain for three years and six months, which happened according to his word.

Hazael the Syrian went to Elisha to ask him concerning his lord, the king of Syria, who lay sick. The prophet looked upon him seriously and wept! Hazael said, why weepest thou? He answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the men of Israel. You will burn their cities, kill their young men with the sword, crush their children and cut up their women with child. He answered, What is thy servant? A dog that this should happen? And Elisha said, the Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria (2 Kings 8:9–14).

Read chapter 12 of 2 Chronicles. All this happened as the man of God said. When Joshua had destroyed the place Jericho he said, “Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it” (Joshua 6:26). The place lay destroyed for a long time because no one dared to rebuild it and thereby lose their oldest and youngest sons. This was precisely fulfilled (see 1 Kings 16:34). It would take a whole book to write those things which have precisely been fulfilled of the prophets.

Let us now consider a number of prophecies about the Savior. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Bethlehem shall be his birthplace, as it is written by the prophet Micah in 5:1. From the land of Egypt I called my son (Hosea 11:1). “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matthew 2:23). He rode into Jerusalem, for the prophet had said, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: . . . lowly, and riding upon . . . the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9). In him “there is no beauty.” “He is despised . . . of men.” “We hid
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

as it were our faces from him.” “He hath borne our griefs.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” “He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:2–5, 9). They broke not his bones. They parted his raiment and cast lots for his clothing. They gave him gall and vinegar to drink. He was sold for thirty pieces of silver and rose from the dead on the third day from the grave. If the Jews had believed this as it was written, then they would have known who it was they crucified. They have either not believed the prophecies or locked their hearts to them spiritually, as have the modern-day teachers. And therefore they have erred and [have] not understood the scriptures and [have] not known the time of their visitation. And the common man believed the learned and chief priests and caused [Christ’s] blood to come upon themselves and their children. Thus, much has been fulfilled precisely as it was spoken.

Is it not then sensible and appropriate to believe the other prophecies exactly as they were spoken? Therefore, when the angel came with the true gospel to Joseph Smith it was according to what John saw on the isle of Patmos [which prophecy was] exactly fulfilled as it was spoken. It is the same with the gathering of the people of God in the last days, having begun to be fulfilled exactly as predicted, both through the Jews coming to Palestine and the Gentiles to Zion.

We see that the Jews, for 1,800 years, have been scattered throughout the world, without prophets, the Spirit of God, inspired priesthood, or kings or priests to lead them to a knowledge of God. No voice from the burning bush, no thunderclaps from Mount Sinai, no inspiration from the Holy Ghost to know the way unto salvation. No pronouncements from the eternal throne. No revelation through visions with angels or through dreams to lead them in the way of life. They are hated
and despised by the Gentiles. Their temple lies in ruins; their sacrifices are fruitless; their priesthood, powerless; their place and land, as a desert.

We say to the Jews, “Why are all these things as they are? Is it not possible that your ancestors have put to death the true Messiah and his prophets and the Lord’s anger and vengeance have come upon you?”

“No,” say the Jews. “We are Abraham’s children, the people of Israel, God’s true Church. Prophets and revelations were necessary in days of old but are no longer needed.”

We say unto them again, “You have gone astray. Your forefathers crucified the true Messiah and the prophecies about him are completely fulfilled through your fathers. You have strayed from the way of truth. It will be unto you as it was unto your people in the days of Eli. The Lord gave no revelation, for the sons of Eli the priest stole the offerings and committed adultery with the women who came to pray (1 Samuel 2). King Saul received no visions or dreams. He received nothing from either the Urim and Thummim or the prophets for he did not obey the Lord’s word, and the kingdom was torn from him. The kingdom of God has been torn from you also, and therefore he reveals and answers you nothing.

There was no prophet for approximately four hundred years from Malachi to John the Baptist. And when he came they had to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. They were godless and had put to death the prophets and stoned those who were sent to them. Therefore John said, when he saw many come to his baptism, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7). When Jesus came, they had seized a place in the temple, which men Jesus called “a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13). They were separated into two religious groups, the
Sadducees and the Pharisees. The latter believed in the resurrection and that angels and spirits existed. Therefore Paul cried out in the council, “I am a Pharisee,” to cause confusion when they intended to tear him apart. They were prideful hypocrites, despising publicans and Samaritans, ignoring the homes of the widow and the fatherless, the blind leading the blind. And Jesus said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33). And they made a great noise and their chief priests took over.

They asked Pilate to place guards at the tomb, for this deceiver had said that after three days he would rise up. And when they knew that he had been resurrected, they paid the guards to lie and would not give God the glory and admit the truth. And after seeing all the signs of his death and the prophecies coming to pass completely, they were still so hardened and void of conscience that it is difficult to imagine. They were little better than the modern-day Christian in believing in new revelation.

When Paul talks of his journey to Damascus and how the Lord revealed himself, that he should be his witness unto all men concerning that which he had heard and seen, then the Jews cast off their clothes and threw dust into the air and said, “Away with such a fellow . . . for it is not fit that he should live” (Acts 22:22).

When Stephen saw the heavens opened with Jesus sitting on the right hand of the Father, they stoned him for it. When Jesus said, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of” the Father “and coming in the clouds of heaven,” then the high priest rent his clothes and said, “He hath spoken blasphemy. . . . What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.” And they spit in his face and smote him (Matthew 26:64–67).
Thus the revelations were rejected in the days when Jesus came to his people. And thus they are rejected today when Jesus has revealed the glorious message of the kingdom to all nations, tongues and kindreds by sending an angel with it as he had promised.

Jesus asked his disciples, “Whom do men say that I . . . am?” They answered, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. . . . And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:13–19). The rock that Jesus was speaking of is revelation.

Some try to show it as a truth that the power of hell got the upper hand because the apostles were killed and the Church of God was destroyed. But the opposite is true. Their souls were taken unto God and his throne with the holy priesthood and authority which they had received.

We say to the Catholic Church: The Church of Jesus Christ has not ceased to govern, neither has the existence of Peter come to no purpose. But both the Church and Peter are in heaven where the power of hell and the papacy can no longer prevail against them. The power of hell has [predominated] and will predominate over the Catholic whore and all her daughters.

But as far as Jesus’s apostolic Church is concerned, she will rest securely in her peaceful abode, where she will remain until the apostate Catholic church, with all her popes and bishops,
together with all the daughters of that whore, have suffered the punishment which their wickedness has brought upon them.

God has from the beginning of the world, during all times, declared and made known his will through revelation. Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto them but my Father in Heaven. And upon this rock will I build my Church. He did not say he was speaking of himself, “but [of] the Father which sent me, [who] gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:49). God revealed unto Jesus that which he should say. Jesus revealed those things unto his apostles and disciples, and after he ascended into heaven, [revelation came] through the Holy Ghost, visions, dreams, angels, and prophecies. God declared his will unto the Jews—or the people of Israel in olden times—in the same way, through revelations. But the Jews did not believe the revelations, or that the prophecies were fulfilled completely—just like today’s Christian does not.

They (the Jews) are the natural branches which were broken off, but the Gentiles were the wild limbs, or branches, which were grafted onto the true vine. They accepted the word of God and became Christians through the teachings of the apostles. And signs followed those who believed as the New Testament bears witness.

The reader will understand that nearly forty years after Christ’s Ascension, the Jews lost their power and the authority of Christ when 1,100,000 died of hunger and by the sword in Jerusalem. Ninety-five thousand were carried away captive to Rome, as was before said. Gentiles were the ones who killed the apostles and destroyed the Church of God. They are drunk with the blood of the saints. They changed the times, the laws, and the fundamental principles of the faith. They stopped their ears to the truth and turned instead to fables. They will not
endure the wholesome teachings but gather unto themselves those teachings which please their itching ears. They have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. They are the great Babylon, the mother of all adulteration and abominations in the earth. The Gentiles have deceived all nations by changing the doctrines and fundamental tenets of the faith which Jesus instituted in his Church. The Gentiles hold power and judgment to this day, and these Gentiles claim membership in mainstream Christendom.

The kingdoms of Rome were the feet of iron on Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, or the fourth beast which Daniel saw. It had ten horns, which means ten kingdoms, or the same as the ten toes on Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. And a little horn came up among them, “before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. . . . In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Daniel 7:8). And this horn made war with the saints and prevailed against them (v. 21). It is certain that the pope is this horn who, in the end, made war with the saints and overcame them (Revelation 13:1–8).

John saw a beast, unto whom the dragon (or the devil) gave his power and great authority, which was the Roman Empire. They were prophesied to make war with the saints and overcome them. They were given power over all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. He saw another beast which had two horns (Revelation 13:11), which seems to be the Greek and Roman Catholic churches which came of the Roman power and the papacy.

The second beast behaved in the same manner as the first. It led away the inhabitants of the earth. It changed the declarations, confused the commandments, and broke the new and everlasting covenant. Have not the Catholic churches confused
the law of the New Testament, which means the everlasting covenant, the doctrines which Jesus established in his Church? They have destroyed the Church of God.

The number of the beast is 666, which some say represents all religions which do not have the teachings of Jesus, which men know to total more than six hundred, who all cry Lord, Lord, who neither know his will nor want to obey him when they hear him.

It is said that by AD 100, all the apostles had been killed. And from that time to AD 323 many creeds, ceremonies, superstitions, and doctrines of men were introduced into the Church. But notwithstanding all this, there were many humble and faithful followers of Jesus Christ who held fast to the apostolic teachings and enjoyed the glorious gifts and blessings of the gospel which belong to the true believers. So long they have been persecuted and hated. So long this has been the daily lot of the saints before God.

But in the year 323 Constantine the Great came into power. He got the religious leaders to agree and to become one, increased the compensation for the priests, and gave them nearly unlimited power. He took unto himself the title of bishop. And from this time forward, we see the Christian beliefs and doctrines set aside.

In this same year, 323, the great assembly in Nicea was called together. There were 318 bishops, priests, and deacons, 2,048 altogether. At this great assembly there was not enough of the Spirit of God or of inspired men to break down the disputations of men concerning the doctrines and principles of the faith. Human wisdom was all they had to rely on. This then was the setting in which the Nicenean faith and creeds were established. And all were compelled to abide by these declarations or be excommunicated in the first place and judged wor-
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thy of death in the second. Leaders of the Church then became the highest authorities, with Satan over them all in the place of apostles and prophets, pastors and teachers. So the saints began to be very creative at carrying out their religious duties, for the edifying of the church—or the body of Christ. They had prison, the sword, fire, being cast into boiling oil, being cast before wild beasts, and many other things as the savage consequences [of their faith] or whatever other methods of cruelty that could be imagined or carried out. And thus the so-called Christian became adept at following these commandments of men (see Hoster, p. 126). This confirms the words of renowned historian Dr. Mosheim in his book: “In the year 570 all spiritual gifts and blessings which were in the ancient church and which belonged to the true church, could no longer be found among the so-called Christians.”

In the year 606, Boniface III was installed as the “Universal Bishop” of the church. All historians and historical writers have borne the same testimony that from that time until Martin Luther’s Reformation, which is over eight hundred years, many false doctrines, superstitions, fornications, and idolatries entered into the so-called Christianity. Nothing is clearer than that there was a great Apostasy. Christianity lost its official representatives, its doctrines, its gifts of the Spirit, and its authority and was no longer recognized by God.

But let us now consider it [the church] after Luther’s reformation. [Luther] was born in 1483 in Eisleben, Mansfield County, Upper Saxony in Germany. One big reason that the reformation occurred was because Tetzel was selling letters of indulgence. Luther, on the tenth of December 1520, before a gathering of people, burned the letter which Pope Leo X had written against him, which stated that he was then excommunicated from the Catholic church.
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

But now comes the question. Where did Luther receive his authority and priesthood to preach his doctrine? He could not have received any authority from the Roman church or the papacy, for it had none but from Satan, and he was excommunicated from that church. From where, then, did he receive his authority, or the holy priesthood?

Some say that it came from God, but that cannot be for two reasons. First, he claimed no revelation from God, or inspiration from the Holy Ghost. And this is the only way God reveals his will unto men. “The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

Second, he did not establish his own church—or congregation—in the same way the apostles did. He had no apostles or prophets, pastors or teachers. He denied the spiritual gifts and revelations. He did not baptize for the forgiveness of sins those who had attained the years of accountability. He did not use the laying on of hands to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. He did not lay hands on the sick, [but] rather sent for doctors. And you must admit that all this is sin and not according to God’s will. This shows that he was not sent by God.

Thus we can see that he, as well as the Roman church, taught another gospel than the apostles and will come under Paul’s curse where he says, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Does John Calvin improve upon the matter? No. Rather, as the great whore the Roman power did, he forced his doctrines forward by the sword and by fire. Thus we see that Servetus and Rodgeir were burned and many [were] killed who would not follow the new gospel.

The differences between the fundamental principles and the leaders in the Protestant churches and Christ’s Church are
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these: Christ’s Church has apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers which lead the Church by inspiration of the Holy Ghost and revelation. The others have learned men who preach the understanding and commands of men. In place of the Holy Ghost to lead them into all truth about God’s will, they have a college to learn the various suppositions and ideas of man concerning the true doctrines and the best way to discover all things spiritual and that which the people would prefer to hear. Instead of teaching as the servants of God did in the early church without purse or scrip, they receive 200 to 50,000 Danish crowns per year. Instead of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, they have seats of meditation and prayer benches where they say that the spiritual gifts come over them. In place of light and knowledge, wisdom, prophecies and revelations, they have “maybe,” “I think,” “that could be,” and so on.

Well has the apostle Paul said, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

Now let us consider Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. He received a vision concerning the kingdom of God unto the end of the earth. He, himself, was the head of gold on the image; the breast and arms of silver were the Median and Persian empires. The belly and thighs of brass were Alexander the Great. The legs of iron, the Roman Empire. His feet and toes were some of iron and some of clay (Daniel 2:33). This kingdom will be somewhat strong but somewhat weak, too. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another (v. 44). “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom
shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter” (Daniel 2:44–45).

The toes on the image are the kingdoms which came out of the Roman power, or empire. Some of the kingdoms are strong and some weak, as the iron and the clay portray. They will mingle themselves together but will not cleave one to another. We see the descendents of royalty blended through marriage, more or less throughout the world. If, dear reader, you would see how the Danish royal line [has been mingled with the world], read a page from your almanac, though they are not compatible one with another. Just as Daniel said, neither England nor Russia helped Denmark in the last war though they were blended by marriage.

It is in the days of these kings that the God of heaven will raise up his kingdom, which will stand for eternity. First, you see that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands. One stone from the mountain. One little people of all nations, [cut out of the mountain] without hands. They will say, “When God erected his Church by sending an angel with the everlasting gospel, it was not established with swords, guns, or wars, but rather through divine revelation.” Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” The kingdoms of our day were established by war and the shedding of blood and are upheld in the same manner. In the days of these kings will the God of heaven raise up his kingdom. What kings? The ones whose families have been mixed through marriage. You will say that they have been mixed through marriage in this fashion for a long time,
and it is true. And therefore the time is come that the God of heaven has begun this great work. The stone is cut out of the mountain.

The Church of God was established in 1830 with Twelve Apostles and all other officers, blessings, and glorious gifts which are spoken of in the New Testament. The kingdom of God is begun on the earth and shall be transferred to no other people on earth. The stone will grow until it strikes the toes of the image that are near the stone, as well as the whole image. But the stone which broke up the image became a great mountain and took over the entire world, which will occur precisely during the thousand years.

The seven seals are seven thousand years; and the seventh thousand years is the millennium, of which I will speak a few words later.

Let us now consider how much of the first six thousand years has passed before the coming of Jesus. From the beginning of the world a total of 5,846 years have passed, lacking just 154 for a total of 6,000, if our reckoning of time is correct. The Jews have one reckoning, the Muslims another, and the Christians a third, to say nothing of a variety of other groups with other reckonings. From this we see that no one has the correct reckoning of time though it is clear we are further along in time than we have calculated or think. But however it is calculated, the kingdom of which Daniel speaks is begun. And this dream (or revealed prophecy) is as precisely fulfilled as the other prophecies of which I have spoken.

I have therefore shown you of the Apostasy and wickedness of the Jews and of the Gentiles: the first from the law of Moses, and the second from the doctrines of Jesus Christ. Also, that neither Luther, nor any of the Protestant churches have the correct gospel or doctrines.
Seventh Chapter

Concerning the temple of God and the Tabernacle, the Millennium and the restitution of all things

There are many who condemn the Latter-day Saints because they are building temples to the Lord, their God. They call it a heresy and the worst kind of vanity (like they consider many other things the Lord has commanded). The Lord commanded Moses to set up the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And the cloud hid the tabernacle. They did not continue their journey until the cloud was taken up (Exodus 40). “The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat” (Leviticus 16:2).

When David wanted to build a temple unto the Lord, the Lord said he [himself] had been traveling in a tent as his home (2 Samuel 7:6). When Solomon completed the temple, the Lord said he would put his name there forever, “and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually” (1 Kings 9:3). When Stephen rebuked the Jews he said that the house that David wanted to build unto the Lord, Solomon had built. But he says in the next verse that the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. As the prophet says, “Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord” (Acts 7:46–50; Isaiah 66:1). God does not dwell in houses made with hands. This means that [the temple] has not been his permanent abode at all times, but he comes there to make known his will to his servants. His glory is there, and his Spirit, angels, and power.
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Jesus did not live in the temple in Jerusalem. But he taught there daily and performed God’s labors. He told those who sold and bought in the temple, “Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise” (John 2:16). The priests do not live in the meeting houses, but they go there to speak to the congregation. I could bring forward many examples to show that the Lord appears in his tabernacle. “And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle” (Numbers 12:5). “And the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation” (Numbers 16:19). “And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you” (17:4). Some will say that God did not give the ten commandments in the tabernacle, and that is true. But he could not reveal himself there for it did not exist at that time.

“In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:1–2). In the last days, or before the end of the world, the Lord’s house, or temple, shall be built in the mountains. And the nations shall flow unto it, which means the gathering of the people of God in the last days. And many nations shall prepare for the journey to the house, or temple, of the God of Jacob, to know his will that they might walk in his paths. For from his house shall the law go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

The word and law shall be given from the temple of God in the last days. Isaiah speaks of the same in [chapter] 2:2–3. “My
tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (Ezekiel 37:27–28). “And I heard [someone] speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever” (Ezekiel 43:6–7).

All these show, in addition to many others, that God has and will come into his temples and dwell in them and there give his laws so that many gentile nations will gather therein (namely, unto Zion). This is the same as when Paul said that the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, unto Zion (Romans 11:25–26).

What is Zion? Mankind has gone astray and has not understood the scriptures with reference to Zion. Zion means the pure in heart; and the land of Zion, the place where they dwell.

The scriptures speak of three places which are called Zion. The Zion that was in Jerusalem in ancient days, the Zion that will be in Jerusalem when it is rebuilt by the Jews and the lost tribes when they come from the lands of the north (Jeremiah 23:8) and David shall be their king and head eternally (Ezekiel 37:24–25), and that Zion which is being built in the western hemisphere unto which the Gentiles shall gather as Paul has said, “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light” (Isaiah 60:3).

Therefore, wonder not though the Latter-day Saints build temples. For we are in the last days says the prophet. And they are built with the gathering of the Gentiles who have gathered unto Zion in the last thirty-eight years, which is the time to prepare before the Millennium and the coming of Christ. Jesus confirms that the will of God dwells in his temple. There he said, “And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein” (Matthew 23:21).
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“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. . . . [He] bound [the devil] a thousand years . . . that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled . . . and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Revelation 20:1–3). This chain and sealing which the angel had is the full power of God's priesthood to loose and bind. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them” (v. 4). This is the same as what Jesus said, that the twelve apostles shall sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). And Paul says that the saints shall judge the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2–3). “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4). This image of the beast appears to be the Protestant churches. “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (v. 5).

There are three resurrections of which the scriptures speak. The first, when Jesus rose from the dead and the graves opened and the saints entered the city and [he] appeared unto many. John speaks of two [additional] resurrections which are yet to occur. The earlier will occur when Christ comes to begin his thousand-year reign on the earth. All, both alive or dead, who have obeyed his teachings, and those who were killed and beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God, shall reign with Christ for a thousand years. But others of the dead will not rise up until the thousand years is passed. This is the first resurrection. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,
but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (v. 6). This is in harmony with that which John says in chapter 5, “And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10).

Jesus says, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). This happens just as it is spoken. It needs no expounding. The seventh verse [of Revelations 20] removes all doubt from this. “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth” (Revelation 20:7–8). This will not occur up in heaven, but rather down here on earth. So when he is released, then he will lead the nations astray as he has done before and gather them unto battle.

But let us now consider the conditions that will exist during the Millennium, when Satan is bound and peace is over all the earth, and all is as it was on the morning of creation before Adam fell and the devil received dominion over the earth and the curse came over all, men, animals, birds, fish, grasses, and reptiles. And it shall be as Isaiah says, “And he (the Lord) shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4). Then “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt
nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6–9). Then that which Joel said will be completely fulfilled when he said the that the Spirit of God will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 3:1; Acts 2:17). And there will be peace and harmony among all living creatures which move upon the earth. It will be a rebirth of all things. Then “there shall be a root of Jesse (meaning Jesus Christ), which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest (temple) shall be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10). He says in another place, “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 65:20–25). Read chapter 60 which addresses the same subject. These things are not spoken in parables and need no explanations. They need not be understood spiritually for they are apparent and tangible on the earth.

How much the world changed during the flood is not precisely known, even though it is found in the scriptures that it did separate into continents and islands, mountains and val-
APPENDIX B: A VOICE OF WARNING AND TRUTH

leys. But after the flood, the world was divided in the days of Peleg (Genesis 10:25). Also, when the Christ was crucified, all the world was changed by earthquakes. But all will be again, at the beginning of the Millennium, or when Christ comes, as it was on the morning of creation, for so it is written. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain” (Isaiah 40:4). “I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 13:13). Then when the seventh angel pours out his vial into the air then every island shall flee away and mountains will not be found (Revelation 16:17, 20).

These are the glad tidings which are called the restitution of all things, or as the apostle says, “When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19–21). From this it is easily understood that Jesus will not come before this time, for he will remain in heaven till that time, and then he will have his priesthood on the earth and his temples come forth. The prophet says (which states the same thing), “Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest” (Isaiah 32:15). “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (prosperity). “For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. . . . For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off” (Psalm 37:11, 22, 28). Therefore, as has been said before, the angel with the
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everlasting gospel has come and has said that the day of God's judgment is come, meaning his chastisement, plagues, and destructions over all those who have been warned concerning the true gospel of Jesus Christ in this day, but who have rejected and cast off the testimony of God's servants.

But, the last, universal judgment will not occur until after the Millennium and the resurrection of all flesh, where all the dead, both small and great, stand before the throne and the books are opened up and all will be judged therefrom according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

This is the eleventh hour in which the Lord has hired laborers to work in his vineyard. And they who come in the eleventh hour receive as much as the first (Matthew 20). They all receive the Holy Ghost, eternal life and immortality, and all the blessings of the kingdom of God which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which have never come into any heart or mind. These are they who obey the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is in this way, and in no other, that we can make white our garments in the blood of the Lamb. This is the proper marriage garment, to obey all the tenets of the faith which were spoken of before. They are come out of great affliction, and have made white their garments in the blood of the Lamb. This means that they were, and are, hated, ridiculed, oppressed, put to death, despised, and cast out to purify the world. This means to take upon oneself the cross of Jesus and follow him. This is what makes the way strait so that few find it. This is the sword and the war that Jesus said would come and be sent over the earth, which is happening precisely, when the people disobey the gospel. Then the son will be against the father and the daughter against the mother, and in a man's house he will find his enemy.
Appendix B: A Voice of Warning and Truth

And thus have they come out of great affliction, or as the apostle says, through many afflictions we begin to walk unto life. And though many are called, few are chosen, for they fear the contempt and enmity of men more than God.

But how can they make clean their garments through the blood of the Lamb when they do not have the teachings which Jesus gave and established in his Church in the same manner and with the same meaning? They will never be held accountable to God except they be reborn of the water and Spirit in the manner that Jesus taught. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

How then can we escape the punishments which will come if we ignore such liberating doctrines as those our Lord first began to teach and later were confirmed unto us from those who he heard? (Hebrews 2:4).

I have now finished speaking about the Millennium and the restitution of all things in the last days, as well as about the temples of the Lord and that he will come and dwell in them.

Isaiah chapter 18 speaks of a land which is like two wings, by the rivers of Ethiopia. It ought to read “beyond” the rivers of Ethiopia. The Danish, German, and English Bibles say beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, for the prophet had been in Jerusalem (or near Jerusalem) when he said this. There is no land that is like two wings except North and South America. And it is beyond the Nile River, which is in Egypt and which flows into the north and into the Mediterranean Sea and which was called the river of Ethiopia in those days. In the 3rd verse the prophet says, “All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.” All those who inhabit the earth are warned to give heed when the ensign is lifted up on the mountains, which means over the edifices of the kingdom
of God, his assembled people, and the temple which shall be built. The sound of the trumpet refers to the everlasting gospel which is sent unto all nations, tongues, and people.

The prophet saw in the Spirit a land which looked like two wings. He saw mountains and God’s temple built upon them and the nations flowing unto them and said that it would be in the last days (Isaiah 2:2–3).

Malachi said in chapter 3:1–2, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?” The Lord shall suddenly come to his temple. But how can he come to his temple without a temple being built and prepared for his coming?

Those who wonder over the fact that the Latter-day Saints gather together tell me: Where is there a house of the Lord (or a temple) built unto which the people of all nations flow to learn to know the will of God except that which the Latter-day Saints build in the valley of the mountains, which the prophet calls Zion? It would be sensible for all who condemn these and other things to think before they speak and know before they judge.

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? We answer: Only they who repent of their sins and accept the message that the Lord has declared before the nations in this day. Only they who will put aside their false opinions, customs, and habits and renounce those doctrines which teach the commandments of men to get gain, for this is the evidence of false teachings as the apostles have said (see 2 Peter 2:3; 1 Timothy 6:5).
Concerning the agency of man, baptism for the dead, Rationalism, and more

It is foolish and improper to assign to fate those things which we can control. We would never be held accountable for acts that were fated. Therefore, we must accurately consider and understand the free agency of man and the things that man is responsible for. You will perhaps say, dear reader, that your fellow men do you an injustice, that they are the cause of the evils that you do, and that you must take vengeance on them or they will entice you and lead you into divers temptations, and this is true. But it would be better that a millstone were hanged about their necks than that they do so. But Jesus said, “It is impossible but that offences will come” (Luke 17:1). I’m afraid it would turn out the same for you as for Adam and Eve. He gave her the blame, and she, the serpent; but they all received a punishment. It would be the same for you whether you were provoked or not.

God has given his children light and knowledge, wisdom and reason, to distinguish good from evil, both in spiritual and temporal things, both by their own experience and through his holy word. He has also given us agency to accept or reject, to do evil or good, and therefore we are answerable to God for words and deeds.

Jesus said to the Jews, “How often would I have gathered [you] as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke 13:34). He didn't take their agency from them but rather predicted their punishment and destruction. They would not obey his word but employed their agency in making light of it. You will perhaps say, with the apostles, that the will to do good you have, truly, but not the power to
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accomplish any. The apostle, without a doubt, meant those things which he had not the means or the resources to accomplish, like giving alms and helping the distressed. For otherwise it would make God's righteousness to no effect, for he rewards one and all according to his works (Romans 2:6). And if their works be evil, and they can do nothing about it, then a righteous God will not punish them for it.

But men will call themselves righteous and lay the debt upon the Lord. Evil words and deeds are no one's fate, rather, an abuse of this agency. Some accidents, unlucky happenings, illnesses, and many unforseen things which are outside of man's power to control, we may call fate. There would be no blessing or exaltation in the kingdom of God for martyrs, apostles, and preachers, who went gladly unto death for the word, testimony, and truth of God if they could not have done otherwise. The devil can influence us with evil thoughts and urge us to commit all manner of evil, but he cannot force any man to commit evil unless we give up our agency, becoming imprisoned by his power.

So you see that God will not take our agency from us, and the devil cannot. Therefore, we are accountable to the Lord for our words and deeds and thoughts for the most part.

Jesus said, “Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?” (Matthew 9:4). “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). “Out of the heart . . . proceed evil thoughts” (Mark 7:21). Therefore may we watch our thoughts, for they come first, and then works and actions.

You may perhaps say, dear reader, that you can't do anything about what flies into your mind, and that is true. But you can cast out evil thoughts and need not entertain and encourage that which is evil in your heart. You cannot stop a bird
from flying over your head, but you need not let it build its
nest in your hair, lay its eggs, and hatch them out. And so it is
with the enticements of the devil and evil thoughts. If we desire
to do the evil which comes into our mind and wait for an op-
portunity to do it, then that is sin. Even though we don’t do it
because we can’t, God, who sees the thoughts and intents of the
heart, counts the desire as an action and punishes according to
his righteousness, thereby satisfying the demands of justice.

It is the same with righteousness. God will look upon the
heart. When we desire to do good, but cannot, then he will
treat the desire as an action. For if we don’t have the power to
direct our words, deeds, and thoughts, then we could not be
held accountable for them, neither to man here on earth or to
God in his court. And thus we shall be judged by our words
and actions.

Jesus said to Job, “Where wast thou when I laid the foun-
dations of the earth . . . when the morning stars sang together,
and . . . shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4, 7). Where were we then,
dear reader? If we are God’s children, then were we there? For
all of God’s children rejoiced, and the morning stars sang a
song of joy, which means the Firstborn of the spirit, the proph-
ets of God, heroes, apostles, and martyrs, who lived and died
and fought for the will and work of God here on the earth.

But why did the children of God rejoice so much? We
were imperfect without bodies and could not be exalted in the
kingdom of God without coming forth in a mortal body and
fighting against Satan and sin and all evil. We knew that we
could overcome all the evil that fights against the will of God
if we used the light and knowledge and free agency that God
wanted to give us to choose the good. We would then become
eternally at peace. It stands within our power, with God’s help
and the Atonement of Jesus Christ, to obey his words, laws,
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and commands as I have before said, and then to live a holy life. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15).

Should we then be perfect, like God? We ought to use the light and knowledge which God has given us to bring about much good, in word and deed. This means we are becoming holy, if we reject the evil. This is the reason that all of God’s children rejoiced when the foundations of the earth were laid. We knew that free agency would not be taken from us, so we could choose the right, as clearly as we knew it. We knew that the word of God and the Holy Spirit would be our guide through the experiences of life here on earth and that we would have everything necessary to support us if we would use it righteously.

But we didn’t know precisely the many and terrifying afflictions that mortal man would face here on earth, nor the enticing and appealing allurements of the flesh and lusts of the eyes. But we can only know these things by our own experience and then make ourselves fit for eternal joy or punishment, according to how we employ our free agency and that light which God to us has given. And therefore all the children of God rejoiced when the earth was created.

But didn’t God know beforehand what his children would do here on earth? Of course. But he punishes no man before he has made himself unworthy of the blessing which he had the opportunity to receive. On the other hand, he exalts or saves no man before he has made himself worthy of it.

You will perhaps say that we will be saved by grace, without works, for thus it is written. But is it not through grace that God sent his Son to overcome pain and death and to free us from the second death? If we follow the fundamental principles which Jesus established in his apostolic church. Is there
greater grace than this? No. That is why all of God’s children rejoiced when the earth was created. And thus it was necessary that God send his Son down here to earth to try them and give them laws and rules to live by; To give them wisdom and knowledge to know and understand the laws, and free agency to accept or reject; and later set before them the good and the evil and reward them according to their works. Is it, then, any wonder that a holy and righteous God rewards those, with an eternal blessing, who believe his words and obey them, and do his will, and are willing to turn away from all evil, and take his cross upon them and follow him thereafter, which means to be hated and despised of all men and to be considered outcasts and strangers in all the earth. But all must endure such who desire to live in Christ, says the apostle (2 Timothy 3:12).

No one ought to think that they who are come of age with a full understanding are without understanding when they do evil. That would be like when the poet says that “when we travel the road of the criminal, true joy hits the road, too. And then I consider that I shall stand before the judgment seat distressed and trembling with fear.” As the poet said, “Through my conscience my peace I find, and rejoice in the eternal Lord who’s mine, because of the price he paid, divine.” This is a foretaste of the peace of heaven.

On the other side is a gnawing conscience, which would become the greatest hell which any man can experience, which is a consequence of the misuse of this free agency. Otherwise there would be no pangs of conscience if a man could behave no better. Adultery was punishable by death in Moses’s day, along with many other [sins]. If people could not (or cannot) stop themselves from committing sin, where then is God’s righteousness? In punishing them unto death? Is God not righteous? Of course! But, if we can overcome evil then it is
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very clear that mankind must suffer for breaking the commandments of God.

There are many who don’t consider the extent of their wickedness, like the drinking man who takes this precious gift [of agency] from God and tramples on it from morning till night, often encountering the dangers of life, hungry and cold. He uses this unusual nourishment to make himself half, and sometimes completely, insensible. He takes the bread from his wife and child, who may work hard and both go hungry and suffer from his disdain for work, sometimes weeping from his unkind words and actions. He creates an earthly hell for himself and them. He blinds the eyes of his soul and runs out into a thousand mortal dangers. He damages his health. He destroys the greatest joy here on earth, which is a good conscience.

Many pay dearly to be healed of their pains and illnesses, but these types pay dearly by becoming mentally diseased and insane. Is not this a misuse of this free agency? It is a problem in all nations and a confirmed testimony that nine tenths of all the most fear-producing, detestable acts and terrible language, and all evils are committed by men and women who have drunk away the greatest of God’s gifts, a sound mind. Can Jesus Christ save, or make whole through his Atonement, those who will not use their free agency to obey the teachings and commandments which he established in his apostolic Church after having made them aware of his will and [having] given them a chance to obey him? I say, no. If he could, or had done so, what then would become of the law of the New Testament? Will Jesus destroy his own words, or the new and everlasting covenant? No. That would not be in accord with his wisdom and righteousness. For the word of the Lord endureth forever (1 Peter 1:25).
The punishment for evil cannot be as severe for those who have not had the opportunity in this life to hear the true gospel. Though the light which they have and consciousness of the law shows them what right and wrong are, they still did not know the commands of God perfectly, nor the consequences for breaking them. So, to some extent, they have excuse.

When a king or an emperor has given out laws in his kingdom, he cannot then alter them of his own accord. For example: If it is a crime punishable by death to kill a man and the king's son has committed such an evil deed, the king cannot save his son from punishment or take back his word. Mercy cannot rob justice of its right.

When the Gibeonites by their cunning obtained a treaty of peace with Joshua, and he said that they should live, he could not cancel his oath or take back his words, though they had both lied and deceived him (Joshua 9).

When Jephthah defeated the Ammonites and took twenty cities, he then made an oath that whatever came out of his house to meet him first when he returned should be the Lord's own or offered as a burnt offering. It was his only daughter who met him, but he could not take back his word (Judges 11).

King Darius could not free Daniel from the lions' den, though he willingly would have. But the king's word was law (Daniel 6). How then can God take back his word? Can he be merciful unto those who break his commandments? Can he be merciful unto one who has committed a great crime and condemn another for the same? No. God will reward each and every one according to their works. He is no respecter of persons and is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

So we see that God's grace and mercy cannot override justice. The sea, death, and hell delivered up those which they had claimed, and each was judged according to his works.
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(Revelation 20:13). Some may say, “Where then does the grace of God come in?” His grace is apparent when we understand that he has given us his holy word, wisdom, knowledge, and free agency, to obey, to choose the right, and to reject the evil of our own free will. He has given us Jesus as Savior and Redeemer if we obey the teachings which Jesus gave, in the same way and with the same meaning that he established.

You will say, “Did not Jesus extend his grace to the thief on the cross?” I say, yes. But he was killed and his blood shed for [the thief’s] sins. That was the reason that so many were killed in Moses's day among the children of Israel, because of great sins. But there are many who believe that the thief went straight to heaven. Be we don't believe this, for when Jesus rose from the dead and came to Mary and told her not to touch him for he had not ascended unto his Father (John 20:17), the thief was not with him. And we don't believe that he had sent him ahead. His body would have still been where it was laid. Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The thief had already believed but had not been baptized. I will conjecture that the living provided baptisms for the dead anciently. The apostle says, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” (1 Corinthians 15:29). From this it is clear to understand that the living are baptized for the dead (those baptized may have been those who didn't hear the true gospel in the flesh and were not baptized with the correct baptism. They therefore would have heard it in the spirit prison).

Jesus went into the spirit prison and “preached unto the spirits in the prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah” (1 Peter 3:19–20). Jesus undoubtedly preached the same message before the spirits as he preached here. But they who were
dead could believe, but not be baptized. And therefore the living would have to be baptized for them. For a spirit may have his free agency to obey God’s commands whether he has his mortal body or is in the spirit prison. This is the way Malachi puts it, that Elijah would be sent “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6). This is fulfilled precisely when the living are baptized for their forefathers and ancestors throughout the centuries, and they accept in the spirit that which their children have done in their behalf. The Apostle Peter confirms this when he says, “For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Peter 4:6).

When Paul is speaking about the witness of the faith that the saints received to make it through afflictions and death [he said], “These . . . received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39–40). Why are they not made perfect? They didn’t have an opportunity to obey the teachings of Jesus fully. And though they had been baptized by water, they were not baptized by the Holy Ghost. No one can enter into the kingdom of God without it, said Jesus. It is so with the thief. Someone had to be baptized for him. “And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau” (or his descendents) (Obadiah 1:21). These saviors are they who have been baptized for the dead and extended unto the saints this important part of the faith who belong to the kingdom of God. They will judge the sons of Esau and witness against those who will not make use of the gospel message. Paul said, “The saints shall judge the world,” and “we shall judge angels”
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(1 Corinthians 6:2–3). So we see that the saints will judge and witness against those who have rejected the glad tidings that they had been given.

From this it is clear to understand that the gospel reaches unto all of God’s sons and daughters from the beginning of the world. And therefore it is called the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14:6). It is therefore a “perfect law of liberty,” (James 1:25) because it saves all who obey it and condemns those who reject it. Jesus said, the words which I spoke will condemn them at the last day. “For it is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). “But faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

About 17 billion have died in 1,700 years who didn’t have the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Many thousands of these hosts, both Lutherans and [those] of other religious groups, have lived here for a time as well as mortal man can live without the gift of the Holy Ghost, who leads men into all truth concerning the will of God, both in spiritual and temporal matters.

Now, all those who have died in the last 1,700 years are in the spirit prison, each with his varied beliefs, superstitions, customs, and habits, both heathens and the so-called Christians. Now come God’s prophets and apostles upon their deaths, clothed in the holy priesthood and with power into the spirit prison to preach the same gospel that Jesus taught. And if they believe them (which is really all they can do), then the living must be baptized for them. And in this way, all of God’s sons and daughters, who are, have been, or will come to this earth, will have a chance and the ability to hear the true gospel so that they have no excuse on the judgment day.

It is said that it is too late to repent after death, but I cannot find that in God’s word. If it is, why did Jesus preach to the spirits in the spirit prison if they had no ability to believe it?
Is not the Spirit the same whether in the body or in the spirit prison? Yes, each has his free agency. The body is the house and tool of the Spirit, that he may accept and reject according to his will. This means those who didn’t have a chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

From this it is easy to see the justice, grace, and wisdom of God which he offers to all his children as the saving formula, “that they all might be damned who believed not the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Therefore, it is a sin to rob the spirit of its free agency through infant baptism. That is like making a covenant with a sleeping man and forcing him to keep it when he is awake. This can be seen more clearly [by noting] that there are many religious groups with both young and old changing their religion and switching from one to another.

There are many men in our day who believe in nothing, neither the word of God or anything else that leads to salvation. Instead they are followers of naturalism. They say that there is nothing except nature, and all that can be seen in heaven and earth is a consequence of her handiwork. They say that the numberless solar systems and all that moves within the vast expanse of space is like a clock that never needs to be wound and carries on from eternity to eternity. If we ask, “Did anyone create these or set them in motion?” they say no. Did these things come into existence on their own without a cause or a reason? They believe so. They admit that the world could not have come into existence by itself and that all things have their cause or [reason] why they came into existence. In another place [they teach] that God in the beginning created heaven and earth from nothing. You know not, dear reader, though you are taught false doctrines. You are bound by the chains of custom. You look neither to the right nor to the left. And the teachers are no better.
The apostle says, “Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:7). Man, with all his learning and knowledge, cannot create anything from nothing. Man can also not cause anything to completely cease to exist, not one hair, straw, or drop of water, or any other thing. There would be ash, smoke, or a vapor going out to blend with the other elements.

If nothing exists but nature, how then did the sun stand still in Joshua’s day? (Joshua 10:12–15). Why didn’t the fire burn the three Hebrews? (Daniel 3:20–27). Why didn’t the lions eat Daniel when he was cast into the lions’ den? (Daniel 6:17–24). Why was there darkness when Jesus died and the veil of the temple rent? Why didn’t nature act like it always had before? What interrupted its normal pattern? Why did the Red Sea part? (Exodus 14:21). Had there not been a hard eastern wind the whole night before, and did it not dry up or part the sea? This all would be unnatural if there were no God who directs all within the heavens and on earth.

They say these things never happened. Others admit they occurred but know not the cause. Where are these guesses coming from? And how did they come into being in the first place? They came from the devil and lead to disbelief in God and his word and then to damnation. Satan would shut out, hide, and otherwise make unintelligible God’s unspeakable wisdom from the understanding of man, so that they will stray from the truth and not acknowledge the hand and direction of God in the kingdom of nature. The fool and the ungodly say in their hearts, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1). They deny the Lord who has purchased them, and sudden destruction hangs over them (2 Peter 2:1).

The so-called rationalists are very similar to those just mentioned. They deny all miracles, both in the Old and New
Appendix B: A Voice of Warning and Truth

Testaments, as having come from God or from his power. They call it witchcraft and sorcery. Some of them admit that God exists but say he can't do miracles or wonders according to their judgment. Here we see how powerful Satan is with the disbelievers. And they call this rationalism.

They say that there is no enemy to the soul and no punishment for evil and no reward for goodness, either. All witchcraft and wonders are accomplished by the wisdom of mankind and are therefore more than God is able to do according to their belief. All these things point to the same thing: the disdaining and devaluing of the power and dominion of Almighty God. They express gratitude for the wisdom of mankind, for mills, machines, and the steam engine. Man can travel over the pathless sea, through stream and wind, without losing his way, and with the birds can travel above the land and through the mountains. He can travel in air machines among the clouds. He can breathe and work under water. He can send his thoughts and words over all the earth in a few moments. He can control the lightning in the air that it cause no damage. He can control the seas, fire, and the winds and make them work for him. He combines the elements of nature to do wonders and miracles. And he praises the wisdom of man and gives not the glory unto God.

But where did all these things come from? Are not these sparks and rays from the Almighty's grand font of all wisdom? Is it not the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which is sent from the Lord and Master of nature and the elements down to mortal man here on the earth?

Solomon received his wisdom from God. The Lord chose Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and gave him the Spirit of God, skill, knowledge, and understanding to build the tabernacle and all things that belonged unto it (Exodus 35:30–35). God gave
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them this wisdom. God has also given wisdom in our day to
discover machines and wonders, whether [the creators] recog-
nize his hand therein or not. They say with great arrogance, as
Nebuchadnezzar, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built
for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and
for the honour of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). They know
not that they are poor, blind, and naked without the help of
God (Revelation 3:17). He is the giver of all good gifts. And
all these helpful discoveries and mysteries of nature, the Lord
has known from the beginning of the world but did not reveal
them until these last days. For he will use them to gather to-
ger his people from the four corners of the earth to build up
his Church and kingdom before his coming.

But the wicked would use this agency to spread death and
destruction over lands and kingdoms and destroy one another
from off the face of the earth, and [to] create a hell for them-
selves, and [to] condemn themselves for the misuse of their
free agency and the light and knowledge which God has given
them. This ought to awaken us to use well the gifts of God,
both spiritual and temporal, for we will be called to account
for the talent with which we have been entrusted, or those gifts
which God has given us.

If evil had not come into the earth, God could not have
tried his children. No one could have done anything but be
good. Free agency then would have been of no use, for there
would have been nothing to choose between. Joy would have
been unknown, for sorrow did not exist. The wisdom of God
would have been hidden to a great degree. No saving atone-
ment would have been necessary and no savior. All would have
lived from eternity to eternity and the world could not have
supported the terrible masses if no one had died from the be-
inning of time; for there would have been (at least) from forty
to fifty times more people on the earth than there are now. From this we see the great wisdom of God that the evil and the good are here on the earth and that he has given us all the strength and help that is required to lead us back to him. God has given us his word and Spirit, angels, the Atonement and intercession of Jesus, wisdom and knowledge to know good from evil, and free agency to obey the saving principles which the Lord has instituted and revealed to save his children.

Some will say, “I don’t think I’d be much better off by getting baptized in the way you’ve talked about.” Naaman of Syria didn’t think he’d be better off either by obeying the word of God when the prophet Elisha told him to dip himself seven times in the river Jordan (2 Kings 5:14). Each command of God has its associated blessings, both spiritual and physical, if they are obeyed in the proper fashion.

Some will perhaps say, “I haven’t committed any great sins and don’t need to repent myself or be baptized.” And that may be true. But then you are no better than Cornelius, for though his prayers and alms had ascended up to God, it was not enough for salvation. He was told to send for the servant of God, who had the holy priesthood. He was to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ and be baptized in the right way, for Jesus has said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Some will say that he was a Gentile and therefore needed to be baptized, and that is true. But the Jews, who were the people of God, needed to do the same. Jesus himself confirmed [the importance] of this divine and solemn ordinance by going down into the river Jordan and showing the manner and fashion of his baptism. And they who will enter into God’s kingdom must obey this commandment, for the words which Jesus has spoken are firm.
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There is no greater ignorance than to think that we can be saved by obeying the commandments of men which are against the teachings of Jesus and the fundamental principles of the faith. Man might just as well plant and sow on the waves of the sea and hope for a good harvest. Man might as well convince himself that he is able to sail over the Atlantic Ocean to some specific harbor without compass and rudder. It would be as sensible to go before the king with counterfeit coins to pays one's tax, or tin in place of crowns, after the king had warned his police and servants that no other coin should be accepted in his kingdom.

Can he then forgive and allow to go unpunished those who trod under their feet and despise his laws? Would that not compromise his godhood and righteousness and be against those laws which he had before established in his kingdom? Therefore, God allows the everlasting gospel to be preached unto all nations, tongues, and people so they can have no excuse when they are called up to make an accounting of their stewardship, or their use of that free agency which God has given them.

It is not sensible or Christlike or in any way just to find fault with, hate, or dishonor any man, though he has sinned or done something he shouldn't have if he (or she) confesses the evil and repents of his sin and does it no more. We see that even the greatest of God's servants have done wrong. Adam fell from his holy state in paradise. Noah and Lot drank one time too many. Moses killed a man and hid him in the sand. He struck the stone two times and therefore could not enter into the promised land. Aaron made the golden calf. David was a man after God's heart, though he committed sin. Solomon was the wisest man though he fell from the truth. Peter had power to seal and release on earth that which was sealed and released.
in heaven, even though he denied the Savior. Paul put both men and women in prison but was chosen as the Lord’s tool to spread the gospel and was taken up into the third heaven.

All these men committed sin, but they repented and changed, and therefore God claimed them and gave them eternal life. It may appear that Paul committed the most sin, but it was during a time when he knew not the will of God and didn’t have the holy priesthood. He confirms this himself when he says, “[I] was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). That all men can cause offence is confirmed by the following story.

When a famous man who was condemned to death for his misdeeds was brought to the place of execution, he said that he had something important and private to tell the king. He was then taken before him, and the king took him aside with his chief advisors who were over both spiritual and temporal matters. He told the king that he had the seed of a fruit tree that would always bear endless amounts of fruit. But it had to be planted by the hands of one who has never done wrong. Therefore, “I thought your Majesty could plant it,” he said.

“I can’t do it,” answered the king. “I am no more perfect than any other man. I may give decrees and commands and be the final judge in the most serious matters, but I dare not say that I have always done exactly the right thing. I will give the seed to the chief justice of my kingdom.”

The chief justice said, “You know, my Lord, that I dispense justice unto sultans and generals in your army and judge in many matters. Some bring money to the proceedings and want to bribe me. I know not whether I have always done exactly the right thing. I will give [the seed] to the bishop.”
The bishop answered, “You know, judge, that I have set up pastors and teachers, completely unsuitable to God’s service, for my friend’s and relation’s sake. And for riches and for my reputation I have sent out monks, with the approval of the pope, to destroy some of the Christians. I have also been so drunk at times that I hardly knew what I was doing. I will give the seed to the priests.”

The priests answered with one voice, “We have never disclosed unto the people what our income has been, and most have paid us many times more than we should have allowed. When anyone has asked us about it, we have said that it is normal to pay such and such an amount, which was much more than we should have allowed. We stand, then, clearly guilty before God and man. And our priestly brothers are killed thousands at a time in the same condition. We cannot plant this seed.”

When the condemned heard this he laughed and said unto the king, “I think it would be best for the people if we were all hanged, for there is no honorable man among us who can justly condemn me to death for my crimes.”

The king smiled and saw then the shrewdness and cunning of the man, and no man could justly confirm his death sentence.

It is written, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). Therefore, the word of God is the same today asanciently. “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38) and obey the same gospel which is again given to the earth in its fulness. For we cannot make use of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ unto salvation unless we obey the law of the New Testament in the same man-
ner and understand the same meaning as Jesus and his apostles taught it.

The Lord has prepared the way for his word in these last days by inspiring kings, politicians, and legislators with his Spirit to give religious freedom unto the nations so that there can be no excuse for the people that they could not obey the true gospel. This is the reason that God has provided for religious freedom in this century, which is a time of preparation for the Millennium. But men are bound by the chains of habit and custom with regard to religious matters, so that they dare not look to the right or left, but trust rather unto convention and habit and human wisdom to save them.

Let me seriously remind you, dear reader, to ask God for wisdom, light and knowledge, and his Spirit to understand and know whether these things ring true according to his word and are the only way to salvation. Jesus has said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). I do not doubt that the reader will believe that this is true. If Jesus, who was the Son of God, needed to pray to his Father for power and help to withstand temptation and to do his will, how much more ought we who are weak and imperfect [pray]. And if we do not pray to the Lord, we have no claim on the promise that he will give us his Spirit to lead us into all truth. Therefore, give heed unto these things and know for a surety that the truth is mighty and will come off victor.

When Adam fell from his holy station and the curse came over all, Satan received dominion over the earth. We are told that “there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent,
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called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:7–10). “Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (v. 12). “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (v. 17).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Latter-day Saints are dishonored, hated and oppressed, and killed, for the devil is in the earth and fights against the descendents of the woman, her offspring, or the true Church that protects the word of God. This heavenly war may sound important, but I see just-as-important things happening here on earth. There are the spirits who fight in bodies with guns and swords. Men also fight here without tools by their disputations and arguments, which are a type of spiritual war where some victories are won. “And (the devil) drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth” (Revelation 12:4), which were a third of the spirits who followed him, which are called his angels.

From this we can see that the spirits in their first estate had their free agency, as well as in the body and in the spirit prison. But they were punished for the misuse of their free agency. We read in Job that Satan had been going to and fro in the earth (Job 1:7). “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Paul calls him the “god of this world,” who “hath blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus calls him the “prince of this world” (John 16:11). Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

When the devil took Jesus up onto a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, he said, “All this
power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is de-

livered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it” (Luke 4:6). Jesus didn’t argue with him about whether or not he had power over it, for he had said that [Satan] was the prince of this world.

Jesus cast out a legion of devils from the possessed man who had been dwelling in an area of tombs (Mark 5). Hallgrímur Péturson says the number of devils was 6,666. All this shows, along with other things, that Satan and his angels are here on the earth and that he has dominion over the earth.

Let us briefly turn our attention to where the evil is, [to see] whether it is in this world over which Jesus said Satan is the prince. Where are the murders, the adulterers, the robbers, the envy, the lies, the backbiting, the deceivers, the intemperate men? Here on the earth. Where is the witchcraft, the shameful villainy, the drunkenness, the blasphemy, the idolatry, the profane language, the destruction, sin, and sorrow? The toil and death, the gnawing and torturous conscience? These are all here on the earth, as is a misuse of free agency, which all men will be called to give an accounting of with each one judged according to his words and deeds.

Where are the serpents, vipers, lions, bears, noxious weeds, thorns and thistles, volcanic fire and earthquakes, storms, hail, thunder and commotions on the seas, burning heat and sear-
ing cold? Isn’t there enough brimstone in the earth? Isn’t there enough in the air? These are not governed by mortal power. What is the evil, and where is it that we could not find it here on this earth?

In previous chapters I have spoken of the terrible acts of Christians and the consequences thereof. All this together shows that the evil is here and that Satan has great power here
on the earth, on the seas, and in the air, or as Paul says, “the prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

Do not think, though, dear reader, that it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of God, for it is through our afflictions that we begin to enter into life. Narrow is the way, and few there be that find it. But everyone who wants to use his free agency to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ can find and walk on the path. Verily I say unto you that those who don’t obey his teachings—or the law of the New Testament—will be condemned by the words which Jesus spoke at the last day.

I hope that all they who believe (or think they believe) the scriptures will admit that enough proofs have been given to confirm the things that have been spoken. If they don’t believe the word of God, then they are not Christians and have no right to call themselves such. I speak alone to those who believe the word of God and rely upon the doctrines and promises of Jesus Christ. May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the unity of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

Notes

1. Biograpical Sketch of “Thordur Didriksson,” in possession of author. Gratitude is expressed to Fred Dedrickson (great-grandson of Thordur) for bringing this document to the attention of the author.


5. Darron Allred translated this text from Icelandic primarily during the year 2001 and finished in January 2002. He grew up in St. George, Utah, and then served a mission to Iceland from 1984 to 1986. He works at Brigham Young University in the Financial Aid Office and currently resides in Spanish Fork, Utah, home to the descendants of the early Icelandic Latter-day Saint immigrants who came to Utah.

6. The title of the tract is clearly taken from Parley P. Pratt’s well-known work *Voice of Warning*. Pratt’s tract was the first time a book had been used for Mormon proselytizing, beyond the LDS standard works. It was written in only two months and is considered one of the most important noncanonical books in Mormonism (see Peter Crawley, “Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering,” *Dialogue* 15, no. 3 [Autumn 1982]: 14–15).