

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

**An ambassador of
God knows about the
religious beliefs of
people, but does not
criticize them.**

Go in meekness, in sobriety, and preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified; not to contend with others on account of their faith, or systems of religion, but pursue a steady course. This I delivered by way of commandment, and all who observe it not, will pull down persecution upon their heads, while those who do, shall always be filled with the Holy Ghost. (Joseph Smith, H.C. Vol II, p. 431)

From the beginning of history, men have pondered their relationship with God—"Why am I here? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die?" These questions are common for all men in all dispensations. God has revealed the answers to living prophets. Today that revelation continues to be given through the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Where men have not received the word of God or have rejected it, they have endeavored to replace it with a substitute. In almost every society on the earth, religion exists as either a living influence or as a tradition of the past. Where religion has failed to satisfy the minds of men, philosophers have sought to answer the questions concerning man's existence.

Many religions and philosophies contain some truths. It is the birthright of every man to recognize good from evil; therefore, most religions teach that it is wrong to kill, to steal, to lie, etc. From most religions have come rituals and traditions which affect the daily lives of the believers and, to some extent, even the lives of the unbelievers.

Today there are four religions which account for much of the world's population: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity.

Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people, and descends from that practiced in the Old Testament. Jehovah is their God. They believe in the law of Moses, and they look forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Islam was founded by Mohammed, the prophet. The Koran is the scriptural source of Islam. They believe in Allah as the one true God. Their religion demands dietary restraints, chastity, and daily prayer. Muslims are characterized by their strict devoutness to religion.

Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama of India, who was said to have reached the state of Nirvana by practicing neither indulgence nor abstinence. Because he taught the way of salvation for others, he became Buddha. Buddhists believe in a life which is compatible with the cosmic forces of the universe and the physical earth.

Christianity is the religion of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior promised by the prophets of the Old Testament and revealed in the New Testament as the Son of God. The spiritual application of the teachings of Jesus distinguish the Christian religion from other religions.

Each of these religions contains many off-shoots or sects, each sect taking on new characteristics and emphasizing new tenants. Aside from these religions, thousands of other religions and philosophies exist, such as Hindi in India and the Shinto religion in Japan. In some cases, the distinction between religion and philosophy becomes somewhat vague. Confucianism, for example, is often viewed not as a religion but an attempt to define morality in human relationships. There are spiritualists, and there are even philosophies which explain man's existence without God. All of these in their own way attempt to answer the basic questions about the purpose of life.

In 1820 Joseph Smith, in seeking answers to these same ageless questions, received a visit from God Himself and His Son, Jesus Christ, who told him that all religions taught for precepts the philosophies of men and not of God. Soon thereafter, the true Church was restored to the earth and missionary work began. Missionaries were commanded to take the gospel to every nation.

This great responsibility of taking the truth to the world is soon to fall on your shoulders. Soon you will encounter the religions of the people of the earth, many of whom are seeking the truth but continue to cling to the traditions of their fathers.

How should you deal with other religions? Should you tear down their sacred idols? Should you mock their rituals and ceremonies?

The most useful approach to this problem is exemplified in a conversation between Aaron and the king of the Lamanites in Alma, Chapter 22. Aaron: "Believest thou that there is a God?" King: "And if now thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe." Aaron: "Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God." King: "Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?" Aaron: "Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth." Aaron began to teach the king the gospel from what he already thought and believed. This great lesson can apply to missionary work today, just as it did in the time of Aaron.

The Lord often taught the gospel by referring to situations familiar to the people. He inspired them to begin searching for the truth deep inside their souls. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile . . ." (*D&C 121:41-42*). This should be your example as you preach the gospel among the religions of the world.

Here are some suggestions that may help you:

1. Make a list of the major religions, religious sects, and predominant philosophies in the area where you will work. Outline the major teachings and prominent figures (historical and modern) for each. Note from your study those areas of truth. Make a mental link of these ideas to gospel concepts taught in the discussions (for example, the Shinto religion of Japan teaches great respect for ancestors; this could possibly be linked to the concept of salvation for the dead and temple work).

2. Obtain a copy of the October 1977 *Ensign* magazine and read the article entitled, "Respect for Other People's Beliefs," by Gerald E. Jones. Note the important ideas in your journal or notebook.

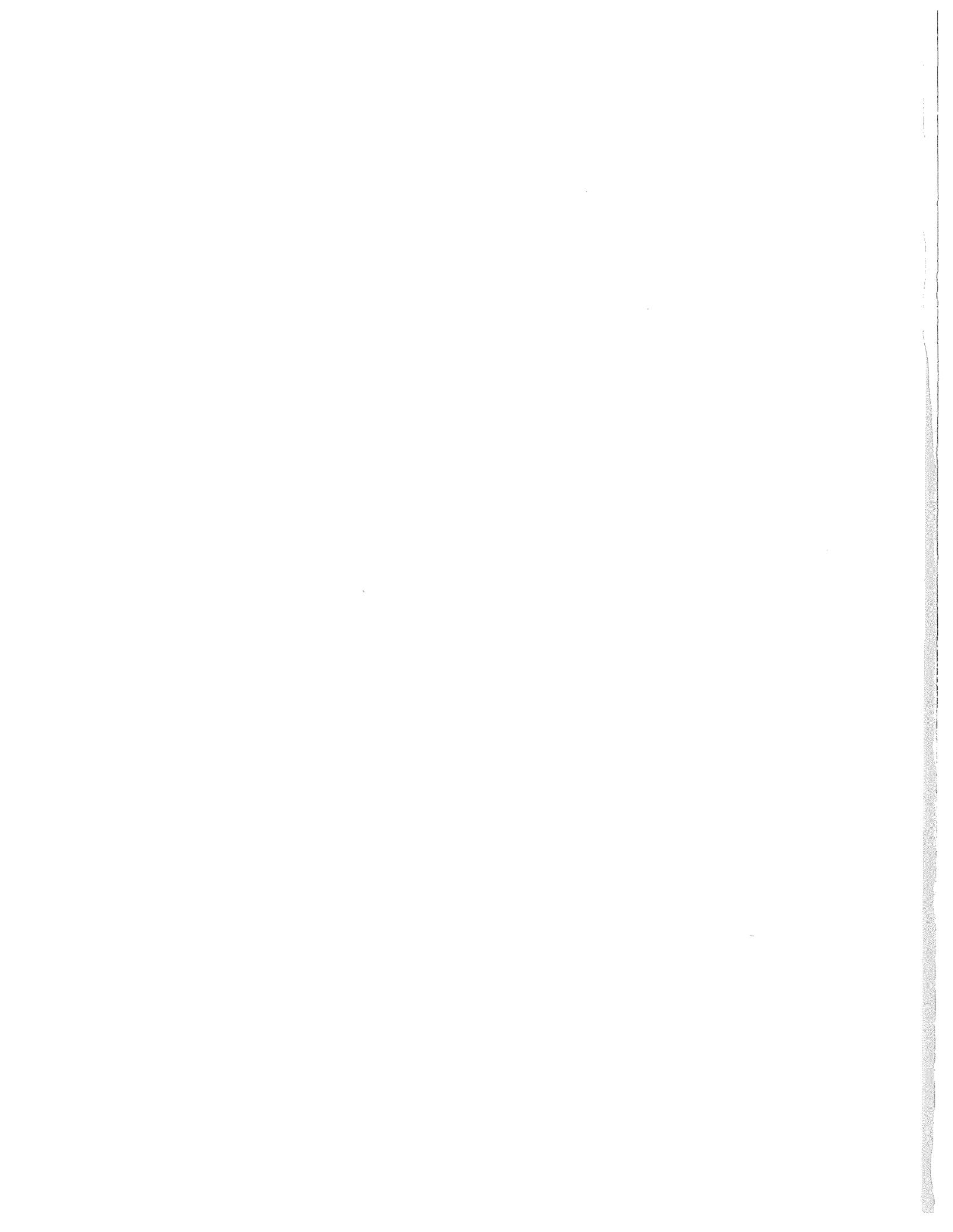
3. Show respect for things that are sacred.

4. Never ridicule or make light of another's manner of worship.

5. Be kind to representatives of other religions. Treat them as you would be treated yourself.

6. In teaching persons with other religious or philosophical beliefs, emphasize points of agreement. Never argue or quarrel on points of religious disagreement.

7. Remember, you do not ask people to give up any truths they have already acquired. You have come to add truths they don't now possess. Your testimony of truth will carry its own spiritual conviction and power.



RELIGION IN GUATEMALA

Religion plays a very important part in the lives of the Indians in Guatemala. It influences the way they think and act in response to everything they come in contact with. As a missionary, you will need to understand these religious beliefs that you will encounter every day. This section will help you become acquainted with these beliefs.

1. Catholics and Protestants
2. Religious Customs
3. History of the L.D.S. Church in Guatemala

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS

Religion in Guatemala is not uniform, but is extremely local. Each town has its own adaptation of what they feel religion should be. Prayers, myths, legends, and celebrations differ from town to town. Each city has its own patron saint, and the day he is honored is a holiday for everyone in the town. Catholics and non-Catholics alike join in the celebration.

The major religion in Guatemala today is Roman Catholicism. It influences the lives of Guatemalans so completely that even those who are not Catholic follow many Catholic customs, such as funeral traditions, the use of religious pictures in the home, and the observance of religious holidays.

Although the doctrines of Catholicism are for the most part uniform, catholic practices and customs vary from region to region. In some of the more remote areas of Guatemala they have been allowed to mingle with the superstition and pagan rituals which the Indians practiced before the arrival of the Spaniards. Catholics generally have images of Christ, Mary, and any number of saints somewhere in their home, and these often play an important role in their everyday lives. Salvation in the Catholic Church is contingent upon the completion of the sacrament.

There are also many different Protestant denominations in Guatemala which are rapidly growing in membership. Because the Catholic Church is often very remote, and seldom understood by the Indians, many find a more lively and personal religion in the Protestant Churches. These churches are characterized by the belief in salvation by grace. Although few of them believe that salvation is affected by individual works, they are often busily engaged in gaining and keeping members. Their active youth programs, Bible study classes, and fasting and prayer meetings are often very successful in involving their members. The leaders of various churches visit the homes of the members often and take care of their needs. Some churches also encourage their member families to gather together in their homes for a weekly family meeting. These Protestants seldom base their belief or testimony in any particular church. Their faith is in Jesus Christ; they join the particular denomination which lets them worship the way they feel is right.

The Protestants typically hold two or three meetings on Sunday, and several more during the week. The sermons are interspersed with periods of vocal praying and hymns sung to the accompaniment of guitars, accordians, or other musical instruments. The Protestant revivals, or "conferences," are joyous occasions. Hundreds of Protestants, or "believers," from neighboring towns gather to hear guest speakers from Guatemala City or from other countries.

RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

Superstition

There are many superstitions among the Indians, particularly those about birth, marriage, and death, that are held in such high regard that they become the religion for many. Religious rites surrounding birth often include both a midwife and a witch doctor. While the midwife bathes the mother, the witch doctor appeals to the gods for the good health of the baby. Among the Quichés, the witch doctor may kill a chicken and let the warm blood flow over the mother if she is very ill. Marriage customs usually include a marriage feast. In some towns, the leftovers from the feast are placed in a clay jar and sent home with the newlyweds. They must eat it all before it spoils or it is believed that their marriage will not last long. At death, many personal objects such as clothing, food, and tools are placed in the casket with the body. It is believed that these will be used by the deceased in the next world. Among the Kekchís, woolen objects are never placed in the casket, as these may acquire teeth in the next life and bite the person's spirit. Care is taken not to forget anything that will be needed by the departed's spirit. If something is forgotten, it may be included in the casket of the next person to die with the request that it be given to its owner in the next world.

The Spirit Nature of Things

The concept of "spirit" plays an important role in the lives of many of the Indians of Guatemala, and has a great effect upon the way that they view the world around them. To them, all things have an unseen spirit in addition to the tangible matter which is visible to us. This is not limited to humans, or even to living things; even inanimate objects such as rocks and hills are believed to have a spirit.

This idea of the spirit nature of things is thought by some to be a form of nature worship, and it does in fact have a strong influence upon their religious practice. For example, planting of crops must be accompanied by religious rituals so as not to offend the spirit of the hill or valley, and Indians will often ask permission in their prayers to take the lives of animals before they hunt. Probably the most important manifestation of this outlook that you will see is the great respect with which the Indians view the things around them. (See this section entitled "View of Nature in the chapter on Preceptions and Values.)

Witches and Witch Doctors

Witches are common in the Indian towns, and the people are very careful not to offend a known witch lest he or she call upon the evil forces and practice black magic on them. The black magic is usually performed because of some wrong done either to the witch or to the person who has gone to the witch to get revenge.

When a person is sick, he may be taken to a witch doctor to be cured. The cure may involve the use of herbs or magic, and often ceremonies with incantations and feasts to appease the gods. Although fewer people today believe in witch doctors, there are still many who depend on them to cure all their illnesses.

Idol and Saint Worship

Many Indians practice idol worship. A group at the town of Chichicastenango climb a hill near there each day to worship rock idol-gods. There are also many saints in the various villages that perform miracles for those who request it of them. Every Sunday hundreds of people go to the town of San Andrés Itzapa to make requests of San Simón. The required ritual requires burning candles, reciting prayers, and making offerings of liquor or money.

Many Indian villages also have a system of *cofradías*, or brotherhoods, organized to care for the saints. Each brotherhood is responsible for the care, the ceremonies, and the processions of a particular saint. The heads of the brotherhoods are elected by the elders of the village. It is a great honor to be elected to the *cofradía*, and only the wisest men and women are chosen.

HISTORY OF THE L.D.S. CHURCH IN GUATEMALA

The Forerunner

In 1916, while living in Colonia Juarez, Mexico, John F. O'Donnal was expelled from Mexico in the great exodus caused by the Mexican revolution. His son, also named John, was born a year later in the United States. When conditions calmed down, John went back to Juarez where he received a patriarchal blessing with the promise that one day he would perform a great work among the Lamanite people in countries further south.

Toward the end of 1941, John O'Donnal was finishing his work at the University of Arizona, when his professors received a letter from Washington requesting a recommendation for someone to go to the countries of Central America and work for the Department of Agriculture on an experimental rubber station which was to be established. The Japanese had cut off the United States' main source of natural rubber.

Brother O'Donnal, although still in school, received and accepted the appointment and after spending a few months in Washington was sent to Honduras to help establish some experimental commercial rubber plantations. Later he made a trip to Guatemala to investigate the possibilities of similar plantation experiments there.

He perceived during his inspection of Guatemala that this country was not only blessed with natural resources and climate, but that the inhabitants seemed to be dissatisfied with their religion and were looking for a way of life that would give them greater satisfaction. Missionary work in Guatemala began to form in his mind and he spent much of his time preaching the Gospel whenever and wherever the opportunity presented itself. But it was a full-time job clearing the jungle and establishing the experimental rubber plantation. Full-time missionaries were needed.

In September 1946, Arwell L. Pierce, President of the Mexico Mission, visited Central America with the express purpose of investigating the possibility of sending missionaries to the various countries in Central America. In December of that year, Brother O'Donnal still with missionary work uppermost in his mind, and with the definite impression that there were thousands of people who were anxious to hear the gospel message, visited Salt Lake City and made the request of the President of the Church, George Albert Smith, that missionaries be sent to Central America.

Brother O'Donnal received an answer from the First Presidency indicating that after careful consideration, they had decided to send missionaries to Central America. In the summer of 1947 the countries of Central America were added to the Mexico Mission, and in August of that same year four missionaries were sent to Guatemala and Costa Rica to officially begin a proselyting program.

In September 1947, President Pierce, Brother O'Donnal, and some missionaries met with government officials in Guatemala to briefly explain the purpose of the Church and to present copies of the Book of Mormon. These government officials expressed their appreciation and welcomed these brethren to Guatemala. On Sunday morning, September 7, 1947, President Pierce, a group of missionaries, and Brother O'Donnal climbed to the summit of a hill overlooking Guatemala City and the first sacrament and testimony meeting was held.

The first baptism performed in Guatemala in this dispensation occurred on November 13, 1948, in the bottom of a deep and narrow canyon in a private pool surrounded by tropical greenery. Brother O'Donnal lead his wife, Carmen, into the water and performed the ordinance.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball Dedicates Land of Central America as a Mission

(English translation of the prayer offered in Spanish by Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve, as he dedicated the land of Central America to the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It was given at the Sunday evening session of a conference held Nov., 16, 1952, in Guatemala City, Guatemala, C.A.)

O God the Eternal Father, we ask Thee in the name of Thy son Jesus Christ to hear our special prayer this day, and to speedily fulfill the great promises made by Thy holy prophets concerning Thy long distressed and deprived people.

Holy Father, we stand this day on the land of Zion, the promised land made sacred by the works, the movements and the activities of the righteous saints and prophets of earlier times and especially sanctified by the repeated visits of Thy Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the land which was also later desecrated and cursed by the follies, sins and unrighteousness of the descendants of Thy chosen ones.

Our Father, we remember with bleeding hearts, the sad afflictions of these children of Lehi in the centuries following their discovery by the Gentiles from across the many waters. We are mindful of their ceaseless wanderings, their untold sufferings and their constant battles for survival. We see them driven from their rivers of fish, their forests with game, from their fertile acres lush with crops and from their homes and other belongings.

We see them scattered, intimidated and pushed. We see them as sheep without a shepherd, dispossessed, enslaved, branded and massacred. We see them hungry, sore, sick and finally reservationed. We see them spiritually bound down by superstition and blinded by the doctrines of men and we cry unto Thee: How long, must the sins of the parents be visited upon the heads of the children? How long before they may be emancipated? How long before the rich promises for them may be fulfilled? How long before they may rise in majesty and strength and power in their ultimate destiny?

We come at this time, Heavenly Father to this part of Zion, even to Central America, assigned by Thy prophet, his counselors and the Twelve to set the boundaries thereof and to implement the work so that here may be preached with increased power the glorious doctrines of salvation to Thy people so long, bound by the chains of darkness.

Our hearts go to Thee in gratitude, dear father, that the great truths of Thy everlasting Gospel have been established on this land through Thy Son Jesus Christ in person, and that they have been given to men by restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the heavens so long closed, and locked by the disbelief and wickedness of Thy rebellious children have again been opened, that the Priesthood so long withheld from unworthy and unbelieving souls has been entrusted now to Thy sons upon the earth; that Thy kingdom has again been given to men with all its responsibilities, agencies and powers, and that exaltation has again been made available to all souls who will comply with Thy commandments.

Gracious Father, we thank Thee for the repeated assurance through Thy prophets that these scattered remnants of Israel on this continent, the choicest of all lands, would be brought to the knowledge of Thee and Thy program and be permitted to hear the gospel, bear the Holy Priesthood and become a blessed people through their righteousness, and we express gratitude to Thee that that day has come and that truth has literally sprung from the ground and that ancient voices have literally spoken from the dust, that the angel Moroni has directed the footsteps of the Prophet Joseph to the long hidden records; that these sacred plates have been faithfully translated by Thy gift and by Thy power revealing to all men and especially to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, the second and compelling witness of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, total triumph and glory of Thy Beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

We are grateful that Thy servants were led to discover this fruitful land with its chosen gospel; that other faithful ones were directed to our American Zion to colonize the land and

bring their witness, the Bible, with them and that strong men were inspired to plan for and secure independence for that part of the promised land which was to be the birthplace of Thy restored kingdom when freedom of religious belief had been firmly established. We are grateful that the devastating persecution and promised and inevitable scattering has ceased or been reduced and that the gathering and blossoming has begun.

We are grateful, kind Father, that Thy spirit has touched these Central American countries and for the measure of peace, tranquility and religious liberty and freedom which exists here. We praise Thy Holy Name that Thou hast made possible the proselyting of Thy people here and we ask Thee to bless and inspire the presidents of these nations, with all their associates in power, that their hearts may be touched and that they may become nursing fathers and mothers to their peoples and that they may receive us as Thy true servants and messengers, and that the way may be opened for free, undisturbed and unlimited missionary work among their citizens.

Father in Heaven, grant that peace may come to the world; that Thy many sons may be released from military duty to serve in teaching righteousness to the frustrated people of the earth. Bless, we pray Thee, the missionary work in all the world but today we ask Thy special blessings upon the Lamanite cause and ask that the seed of Lehi in these Central American countries and the gentiles among them may see and hear and understand and have the courage and fortitude to accept and live the exalting program of The divine gospel. Let stony hearts be turned into hearts of flesh. Let repentance come in great measure. Let them accept the revealed word as parched and thirsty lands drink in the rains of heaven.

Bless the missionaries and the Saints that great power be given them, that their devotion may increase, that their labors may be fruitful, their testimonies convincing, that this great people may be converted and be healed.

Be pleased, Holy Father, to stay the power of evil, bind the hands of those who would frustrate Thy work here, raise up friends to Thy cause and let Thy work flourish and prosper among this people.

Now, our Father, let Thy ceaseless revelations flow to Thy prophets, seers and revelators and particularly to Thy chosen prophet, President David O. McKay who stands at the head of the church, that the work of emancipation of these millions of Thy chosen people be prospered and Thine oft repeated covenants to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be fulfilled. Smile upon the serious attempts of Thy humble servants and consecrate all their efforts to the good of this people.

Let peace reign here in Central America and in all the world, give success and accomplishment to the new presidency of this mission with all their associates. Let conversion come to many and let Thy kingdom be established here as in other parts of Thy vineyard.

And now, Holy Father, we pray that when these, the seed of ancient prophets shall have paid the uttermost farthing, the penalty of rebellion and disobedience, when they shall have hungered

enough, and wept enough, and agonized enough and repented sufficiently, let them blossom as the rose upon the mountains, and let them be converted "a nation in a day" and let Thy work be glorified and Thy people receive the promised blessings. This we pray for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

First Missionary Efforts

The first missionaries to serve in Guatemala worked hard, but met with little success. As more missionaries began to work even more, persecution against the Church also grew. Different religious sects began to publish fliers warning the townspeople not to speak with the Mormons. False rumors about the missionaries and about the Church were broadcast throughout the towns from the speakers atop the different churches.

It was under these conditions that two elders were sent to the small Indian town of Patzicia and experienced some trying days in their first efforts to teach the gospel to the Indians.

They were told that they were not welcome in Patzicia and that they must leave. When they continued to preach the gospel in the village, the townspeople became quite angry. When they attempted to pass through the plaza in the center of town, a large crowd gathered around them. A spokesman for the crowd told them that if they did not leave that they were to go to the cathedral that bordered the east side of the plaza. There, it was learned later, many women of the church had hidden in their clothing branches of trees with which they planned to beat the missionaries until they were forced out of town.

As the angry mob circled around them, the two missionaries became quite apprehensive but it was not intended that they leave Patzicia. From among the Indians, one emerged and beckoned them to follow him. The crowd parted as an Indian led the two missionaries to safety.

Conversion Stories

The following is the true story of the conversion of a Cakchiquel Indian from Patzicia, Guatemala, as told in his own words.

My wife told me one day that some young people had come, "gringos," to look for me, asking for me by name. But since I was very poor, I always left at 6:00 in the morning, at times at 5:00. Then later my wife said that the two young "gringos" had come by again asking for me by name....I told my wife to tell them that they could find me at 6:00 a.m. if they needed something from me. And so, a few days later, they arrived just as I was leaving. I greeted them, not knowing then that they were elders, but called them "Mr." and asked

them what they needed with me. I admired greatly the testimony of these missionaries because they were the first to arrive in Patzicfa. They wore coats and hats, but when I opened the door they took off their hats and greeted me in a kind way. Then they declared to me the purpose of their visit. Then I told them, "Gentlemen, I am very sorry but I am now preparing to leave for the field. If you would be good enough to come at 7:00 tonight I will be happy to receive you with my family." So that is exactly what we did, and that day I talked with the missionaries in my home.

I told my children to return home early from the field. We worked quickly in our field duties so we could return home early. When we arrived I told my children that they should sweep the patio and prepare if possible to clean our little house because two people were coming to talk with us of the Word of God. Who knows why I felt an influence from their message, but I did. When they arrived at 7:00 that night, we had no place to receive them except in our humble kitchen that God had given me. I told them I hoped it would be all right to talk in the kitchen. We put out the fire because they couldn't stand all the smoke. And in that situation, they gave us the first lesson. But before all this, they took off their hats and greeted us in a special way.

Then they offered a prayer asking our Father in Heaven for my life and the life of my children, for the life of my wife—for the life of my family. I was amazed listening to their prayers. The first prayers the missionaries gave impressed me and grabbed my attention. We knelt that first night and asked God to enlighten us as to whether or not this was His church as the missionaries had testified. But that night, God did not answer us. And in the same way on the second night, we knelt again and asked God that he enlighten for us all that we needed to know of His church. We passed both nights this way, and God still did not answer us. And then the third night we asked again and yet he still did not answer. The fourth night we knelt again, this time fasting, so we would receive an answer. And that is what God wanted and he did answer us.

That night I dreamed that I walked on a road in search of the Gospel of God. I found a man who had no hat, and he told me, "Where are you going?" "Well, I am searching for the Gospel of Jesus Christ." So then the man told me, "Magnificent! Come here with me. I am the minister of a church. Come, here is the truth."

I told him "Thank you but everyone says they have the truth. I am looking for the authorized church." "Ah—authorized church. That is impossible to find. That came before." That is how this man answered me, and I continued walking. I found another man and he told me the same thing. "Come here also, here is the truth." I answered him in the same way, and continued walking. I found another man who asked me what I was looking for. "The word of God," I told him. And he told me, "Here is the truth, come here with me." And so I passed six men and each told me in the same words that they had the truth. But I answered all of them, "You all say you have the truth and this confuses me. Who

knows who I can believe? Thank you, but I need to find the Church of Jesus Christ." I continued walking and all at once, I saw a man. This man had a serious look and blond hair. I don't know if he was lowered from the heavens, or if he raised from the earth, or if he came from the side of the road, but when I saw him, he was already in the middle of the road. He said to me, "Brother, where are you going?" and I told him "Sir, I am in search of the word of God, the holy Gospel. That is what I am searching for." And he told me, "You have done well, brother. This is the road of the truth. I tell you with all my heart—with all my spirit—that this is the road that you are following. I tell you that it is true, because I am a servant of God. I am the modern prophet. I am a prophet. My name is David O. McKay."

I had passed him, but turned and gave him my hand. In my dream I could feel it when he squeezed my hands, and I thanked him. I had heard his name before, but did not know him from his picture. And so I related this to the missionaries. They told me that God communicated through dreams if he wanted to, and yet they did not take me too seriously. About a week later, they came with pictures. When I looked through them, I found the picture of the man who talked to me in my dream! This was the man named David O. McKay. They told me that my dream certainly was from God because this man was the living prophet of God. He was the President of God's church here in the world. Then I was converted to the word of God.

I told my family to pay attention to me, and that they would have to read the scriptures every night. And they did pay attention to me, and we were baptized.

The following conversion story is typical of the outside pressures Guatemalans often encounter when they begin to investigate the Church.

When the missionaries first arrived at my house and knocked at my house, I was afraid to go out. I didn't like them because I didn't know if they were good or if they were bad. The people in the street were telling me that those men were very, very bad. They said, "Careful if they enter your house because those men are real women chasers." That's what the people were saying. "That religion," they said, "is very bad." But I had the desire to know what the word "Mormon" meant.

I went over to an acquaintance of mine who was a professor and I asked him "Sir, what does the word "Mormon" mean? I want to know if it is a bad word or if it is a good word." He told me "Well, I don't know what that word means, but I think it is a bad word because those men who walk around town say they're Mormons, and they are very bad. Careful, boy, don't get involved with them because it is very bad."

But later I thought, "who knows if what the professor told me is true—that those men are very bad. Who knows, maybe that man doesn't know." My family was worse. They did not like it. But the missionaries came again to my house and knocked on the door saying they were representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ and said, "We have come to visit for fifteen minutes." But I told them that I didn't have time, and the poor guys left.

They arrived again, knocking at the door. I thought then that they might as well come in. In any case, one can hear for himself what they have to say. Then one can say if it's bad or good.

That also happened with the clowns that came to town to put on their show and to tell the people to go see them. When I was still a child I wanted to see them, but the people would say that it was no good and that it was very bad to watch them. But I continued with the desire until I went in. And I liked it. I said that it wasn't bad because it made one laugh.

Well, then since the people said that it's bad, the thought came to me that I had seen the clowns many times, and I felt the same way with my life. They never did anything to me. They didn't hit me or insult me or anything. And furthermore, these men might be better than the clowns, I thought. And so I gave them permission to come into my house.

But since I didn't have a house (it was nothing more than a shack all full of smoke), I told the missionaries, "Mister, welcome. But it just so happens that I don't have a house. There is no place for you to sit down and spend a few moments." Then the missionaries told me, "But Sir, we didn't come to see the house; we came to see you. It doesn't matter to us even if we stay under the tree over there. That doesn't matter." Then they entered and began to talk with me.

Beautiful were the words the poor missionaries told me—beautiful, beautiful words. I had never heard those words before, and I had been attending for some time with the evangelists that were here before, but they didn't say words like that.

And so the missionaries came again and they gave me more lessons. And thus I found out that the religion was very good. They came for a year after the missionaries first arrived, and later I was baptized, and later my wife was baptized.

Then I went to the meetings with the missionaries. It was a rented place just above the fountain on the main street. The missionaries ran the meetings, and there were very few members. The missionaries were the ones who did everything. But the people, oh how they spoke all the time.

I was once with a man who said to me, "Is it true that you have joined the Mormons?"

"Yes, it is true," I answered.

"What is the foundation of it? If you tell me the foundation, you are free, but if you don't know what the foundation is, I'm going to beat you up."

"I know what the foundation is," I told him. "Its foundation is the primitive church that had twelve apostles."

"Who knows if that's true," he said. "It's a lie."

I know that it is true. I don't pay attention anymore to what the people say to me. If they hit me, God knows that they hit me—and just for the word of God.

Now I had an uncle who talked a lot. He always scolded me, but I didn't pay attention to him since I already knew that this was the true religion. Also people from the other sects came to me and tried to get me to join with them again, and said "Why did you go with the Mormons? It is better that you come here with us."

"Thank you very much, but no, because I know that it is better where I am right now and not there with you," I would tell them.

I am always happy with the word of God. I say that the most important things in my life are that I've always felt like planting corn and a few beans and a little wheat for my food, and the other most important thing is the word of God. Those two things are most important in my life.

The Lord has blessed many of the humble Indians in Guatemala with dreams and visions to help prepare them to receive and understand the Gospel. Consider this account by an Indian woman of Guatemala. She had already been baptized when she had this dream, but the husband she mentions had died some time before she had met the missionaries.

"After I was baptized I had a dream. I saw that I was walking along a large road, alone with my husband, and from the side of a hill, the Mormon missionaries were coming down. I was afraid in my dream, I felt afraid because I knew that my husband didn't know that I was a member of the Mormons. I thought that when he found out he would be angry with me, and when he saw them coming down off the hill, he asked me, 'who are they?' I told him that they were the Mormons. Then he answered me and said, 'Ah, I want to know what the Mormons teach. Go on ahead, take your road, and I would like to talk with them. I want to know what they teach.' I was very happy in my heart when he told me this, and I thought to myself that he wouldn't be angry that I was a member with them. I went straight on, but he stayed to speak with them. They put him in between them, then each took my husband by the arm and they began to walk slowly.

"Then I saw that I came to a crossroads. There was a great and high wall there. On one side was a wide road, and another narrow road was on the other side, climbing the side of a hill. There I stopped and waited, because I didn't know which of the two roads I should take, the wide or the narrow. My husband caught up with me along with the missionaries, and my husband said to me, 'let's go, don't stay here.' I answered and said that I didn't know, I stayed here because I didn't know which road I should take, the wide or the narrow. 'Go,' he said to me, 'take the road you're already on, so that you'll arrive quickly. Go on the narrow road, and we'll catch up with you there.'

"I went on, and took the narrow road alone, and began to climb up a little hill. As I was climbing, I saw that I was no longer alone. My youngest daughter was with me. We went on together, then I heard someone calling me saying, 'wait for me, I want to go. I will catch up to you,' and it was my next daughter. I waited for her, and then two of my daughters were with me. I went on a little further, and then I heard a cry, very far away. It was my other two daughters who were calling me from down below. 'Mama, wait for us, we want to go where you are.' And I stopped there to wait for them. They began to climb up to where I was so they could catch up to me. We rested there upon the hill, and began to prepare some food while we waited for my husband to come with the missionaries. And then I woke up.

"Later I realized that the Lord had shown me this dream. Not long after my baptism, my youngest daughter was baptized. Later, the next daughter was baptized, and later still the two oldest were baptized together, and that made me very happy. My heart is very happy now, because all my daughters know the word of God, also my mother, my brothers, one older and one younger, and my brother-in-law, and also my daughter's husband have all been baptized that they might know the word of the Lord. And thus little by little all my family have come to know that the road I chose was very good."

For Further Reading

Communication of the Gospel in Latin America, Eugene Nida.

The Maya: Sons and Daughters of the Royal House of Israel, members and
and missionaries of the Guatemala Mission.

Tales of the Cakchiquels, compiled by Larry Richman.

Protestantism in Guatemala, Gennet Maxon Emery.

It is essential for missionaries to understand that proper behavior opens doors for teaching the gospel, and improper behavior closes doors and destroys the image of the Church . . . (Statement Regarding Social Behavior of Missionaries, Missionary Executive Committee, August 24, 1976).

An ambassador generally meets people from all stations and walks of life. In order not to offend, he learns the rules of etiquette and decorum of his friends as best he can. He maintains his own identity, but is not pompous or ostentatious about apparent differences. He is at ease in the governor's mansion as well as in the peasant's humble abode.

Because of the thousands of homes that you will visit and the many thousands of families and individuals you will befriend, a mission can become a great adventure. In fact, the pinnacle of a missionary experience is the time you spend sitting eye-to-eye with people, teaching them heart-to-heart about eternal truths of the gospel.

As a missionary, you will be treated by many as the sons of Mosiah were treated (*Alma 27:4*). Because of this trust of the people and the trust that the Lord has in his missionaries, everything that you do as a missionary should enhance the possibility that many will believe in your words.

Many times, however, you may be confronted with a situation that may cause you to offend the people you have come to serve. Out of custom or respect, a person might offer you tea or wine. Because of tradition, a person you are teaching might have idols or religious objects in his home. Because of a non-religious background, a person may not understand many religious terms you use. Because of social restraints, a person may feel embarrassed to be with you. If you are from another country, a person may want to discuss political matters. What will you do?

Most problems can be avoided simply by preparation. To avoid offense, you should learn the manners and customs of the people, become sensitive to their values, and respect and tolerate their traditions. Do not contend with them because of religious beliefs. Most important, you should recognize them as individuals, as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

The Lord expects that His ambassadors will represent Him well. He has promised that He will bless your efforts. "And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (*D&C 84:88*).

ENCOUNTERING CULTURE AS A MISSIONARY

Ambassadors are prepared to meet conflict situations graciously and effectively.

May you take this responsibility seriously that you may look forward to the great reward of missionary work and ambassadorship in the Lord's kingdom.

Here are some suggestions that may help you:

1. In your readings and talks with people, take note of all customs, beliefs, traditions, and values that cannot be reconciled in the gospel (for example, Great Britain's custom of having black tea). Make a list of these items; by the side of each item write what you intend to do when faced with this problem. Perhaps there will be several solutions. Ask members, senior companions, or even non-members how best to confront these things. In some cases it may be necessary to research the Church's stand on certain cultural issues. Ask your mission president for the proper way to handle such situations. In each such circumstance, however, you should be kind, patient, and long-suffering. Never offend persons by demeaning their customs or traditions, even if they are not compatible with the gospel. Work with them with love and understanding.

2. Become skilled at avoiding discussions about political issues. The Savior was confronted once by this problem. Pharisees, in an attempt to discredit the Savior, went to him with a question of a political nature. They asked him: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?" The Savior asked them to show him a coin. He asked them, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They recognized that it was Caesar's face on the coin. The Savior then answered, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." The apostle Matthew then mentions that "When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way" (*Matthew 22:12-22*).

3. Use your knowledge of the culture to become a more effective teacher.

ENCOUNTERING CULTURE AS A MISSIONARY

As a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, your contact with the people in Guatemala will be different from that of the average tourist. This section will present several common problems that you are likely to encounter as a missionary in the Indian areas of Guatemala. Study each problem and formulate in your mind how you might handle that problem when and if you meet it.

The following topics will be discussed:

1. Missionary Image
2. Dressing Like a Missionary
3. Word of Wisdom Conflicts
4. Poverty
5. Distributing Pamphlets
6. Selling the Book of Mormon
7. Marriage
8. Respect for the Beliefs of Others

MISSIONARY IMAGE

In Guatemala it often appears very strange to see two young North Americans dressed in white shirts and ties walking around a small Indian village. Many people will believe that you are businessmen out to take advantage of the townspeople. Others may believe you are C.I.A. agents spying for the United States government. It should not be difficult, however, to convince the people that you are sincere missionaries if you show them your genuine concern and if you perform your missionary labors diligently. Do things for the people. An occasional service project will help them remember that you are missionaries who are genuinely concerned for their welfare.

Remember that you are not an ambassador for the United States, nor are you there to convince people of the virtues of being a North American. Don't talk about "the way it is back home," but rather help the people to see the virtues of their own culture. Help them recognize the beautiful things in the world around them. Teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. That will do more to make them happy than anything else you could do.

DRESSING LIKE A MISSIONARY

In an effort to identify with the people who live in poor circumstances, some missionaries have tried to live and dress like the people. They wear sandals and poor clothing and live in very humble quarters. But this type of outward imitation is easily recognized as being artificial and is rejected quickly. The identification that is needed is not imitation, but full participation as a member of the society. You need not deny your own culture—something you could not do even if you wanted to—but rather use your background and experience for the benefit of others. Be sincere and dress like a missionary.

Consider this excerpt from the autobiography of a Cakchiquel Indian:

When it [the truth of the gospel] penetrated me was when Sister Mich died. I went there with them [the missionaries] for the burial. At that time I still wasn't a member. The missionaries celebrated two meetings, and when they said the prayers, I felt that they penetrated me to the soul. And when they sang their hymns, they sang well and their voices blended together very nicely. I liked it a lot. "Perhaps I'll be a member of that church," I said. And finally, I saw that they didn't wait around, and they didn't want the other local brethren to do it, but they themselves carried the body. And all the people in the town admired that the distinguished, spiffed-up gringos with ties were carrying a poor, simple Indian. That's where they gave the example. And the people admired and many said, "Probably those men bring the truth." That's what they said

because the missionaries were not ashamed to join together with the Indians. Then I said that certainly those young men have kept the commandments because they are no respecter of persons.

WORD OF WISDOM CONFLICTS

Besides coffee, the Indians in Guatemala have many drinks which are made of corn, chocolate, or *habas*. Many of these, however, also have a small amount of coffee included with the other ingredients. It is often hard for them to realize that it is wrong to drink these since they do not consider them coffee.

When teaching people about the Word of Wisdom, you should be careful to explain to them that it is wrong to drink anything that has even a very small amount of coffee in it.

POVERTY

Most of the people you will teach on your mission live in poverty; for them, life is difficult and at times seems unjust. However, despite the dominance and suppression that they have lived under for years, they are a remarkably happy people. They hope for a better future for their children than they had, although many of them are not sure it will ever come about.

Since it is often difficult for them to provide for the basic needs of the family, it may prove a tremendous burden for them to find transportation to church meetings and to conferences if it is too far to walk. The story is told of a Quiché man who would attend church in town each Sunday, but would leave after Sunday School each week and not return for Sacrament Meeting. One day when a missionary asked him why he never came to Sacrament Meeting, it was discovered that the man lived far from the town and had a six-hour walk to return home. He had to leave after Sunday School to make it home before dark.

You need to be patient and understanding with the people to help them realize that the Lord will bless them for the sacrifices they make. Tithing may be especially difficult on a meager income. Do not accuse them of being greedy if they don't feel that they can pay a full tithing; encourage them to have faith that the Lord will bless them when they pay their tithing.

Be sensitive to their feelings if they offer you food or other gifts. Accept their generosity kindly, even though you feel that they should keep it for their family. Let them receive the blessings that come from being generous and kind.

DISTRIBUTING PAMPHLETS

Since people are usually eager to receive any free literature, many missionaries give out as many pamphlets as they can, but they are often deceived as to its effectiveness. Use pamphlets wisely, distributing them to those people you believe will read them. Widely distributing literature on the street may make the Guatemalan people react to the gospel as nothing more than cheap propaganda.

SELLING THE BOOK OF MORMON

Often missionaries want to give away copies of the Book of Mormon rather than sell them. When they see people who live very poorly, they sometimes want to pay for the books themselves rather than charge the people for them. They also may wish to avoid the appearance of book salesmen or others who are out to make money off the poor people. But remember that the Lord will bless anyone who makes a sacrifice to pay the price of a Book of Mormon. If they buy it, they will treasure it and will be more likely to read it. Also, in the process of selling the book, you have the chance to testify of the truth of the message the book contains. You also have the chance to challenge the buyer to read the book and to find out for himself that it is true. If it is distributed free, you may be classified as a propagandist, for which they assume you must be well paid, and your testimony to them becomes meaningless.

MARRIAGE

Many of the Indians believe that the civil ceremony is merely a legal prerequisite to a church wedding. Priests are sometimes scarce in the remote Indian villages, and they charge to perform the ceremony. Some isolated areas have traditional rituals which give local recognition to the union of the couple; these often have more meaning to the Indian than a civil ceremony or even a church wedding. The government is often so remote to them that official recognition of marital status actually means very little.

Marriage in Guatemala may take place in one of three ways: by a civil ceremony, either with or without a church wedding; by rituals performed according to local traditions; or by common-law unions. Previously only those marriages originally performed by a civil ceremony were recognized by law, but in 1947 a legislative decree made it possible for a couple living in a common-law union to have it legalized by local authorities. In recent times a few people have availed themselves of this right, but there are still many common-law unions which have not been legalized. Also, ritual marriages performed according to local tradition are not recognized by law.

Before performing their baptism, you will always need to check the local civil records to determine whether a couple is legally married. If not, a civil marriage generally must be arranged before the family can be baptized.

RESPECT FOR THE BELIEFS OF OTHERS

As a missionary, you will encounter many people whose beliefs do not agree with your own. You need to respect those beliefs and use care not to offend those who hold them.

We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

--(11th Article of Faith)

As a missionary, you will find yourself in many situations where you will have to determine how to appropriately show respect. Consider the following situations and the suggestions that follow:

Situation

You are teaching a man who is a strong member of a local protestant church. He sincerely believes that he is in the true church and that the leadership of his church is inspired of God. He tells you he has a testimony that his church is true. Although many things he tells you about his church are good, you see that it does not teach entirely correct doctrine and that it is missing much of the truth. Should you tell him that he is all wrong and that he should join the true church?

Look At It This Way

Build on the foundation he already has. Since his belief in God and in his church are deep and sincere, use that to your advantage in showing him Christ's true way. Trying to tear down his belief will produce nothing but an adamant enemy. Recognize his beliefs that are correct and reinforce those beliefs. Don't dwell so much on the differences between his church and yours that he begins to think that you don't believe in the basics of Christianity. Often his viewpoint will include a belief in Jesus Christ, the atonement, and other things which are very important for him to recognize that you believe in also.

Situation

You have approached a man on the street and you begin talking with him about the Restoration. When he hears the name Joseph Smith, he becomes angry and begins calling you Joseph Smith Worshipers. Trying to state your case for the Prophet only makes the man more angry and he begins arguing in a very loud voice, saying that you do not believe in Jesus Christ. He loudly proclaims that belief in Christ is all that is necessary. When you look around you, you realize that everyone on the street has stopped to watch the argument. What do you do?

Look At It This Way

Some people will take any opportunity to start an argument. Although the temptation is great to want to prove your point, remember that Christ forbade arguments on the points of his doctrine (3 Nephi 11:28-30). The Spirit does not dwell where there is contention, and without the Spirit it is impossible to teach the gospel to anyone. Arguing anywhere, and especially in public, will only turn people away from the Church.

In teaching people about the restoration of the Church, it is necessary to explain the role of Joseph Smith and to help them believe that he was a prophet. Often, because of this necessary emphasis on Joseph Smith, some people begin to think that we believe in him, and not in Jesus Christ. As servants of Jesus Christ, you should always bear testimony of Him. As important as Joseph Smith is, the people you talk to must know that for you, Jesus Christ is most important and is the center of the Church. The best thing to do in such a situation would probably be to tell the man that you prefer not to argue, and politely end the conversation.

Situation

You have been invited to attend an evangelist church service to meet people and to let them know you are a sincere member of the community. After the usual greeting, the pastor invites all the members of the congregation to pray. You are surprised when they all kneel and begin praying out loud since prayers in your church meetings are offered by one person who gives the prayer in behalf of all present. When you hear the confusion of hundreds of voices praying earnestly, and often loudly, you become confused. What should you do?

Look At It This Way

If you remain seated on the bench, the members of the congregation are likely to think that you have something against prayer. Such action on your part would demonstrate the opposite of what you want to teach. Show them by your actions that member of the L.D.S. Church, of all people, consider prayer very important and something that should be done often. There is nothing wrong with kneeling to pray, although it may be rather disorderly during a meeting. Take advantage of the time to pray for the Lord's spirit during that meeting so that people can learn by your example. It may not hurt also to pray for more sensitivity so that your actions reinforce and not contradict what you teach.

For Further Reading

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