volved and is not just the responsibility of the one who feels hurt or angry. The nature of the reconciliation depends upon the specifics of each situation. Rather than relying on human understanding or formulaic solutions, the Saints are taught to seek divine counsel and to trust the direction of the Lord, the reconciler of all (Prov. 3:5–6; D&C 112:10).

Standing in the way of most solutions to contention is pride: “Only by pride cometh contention” (Prov. 13:10). “The central feature of pride,” declared Ezra Taft Benson, “is enmity—enmity toward God and . . . [toward] our fellowmen.” Underlying the solution to contention must be the desire for harmony between people which can come only as a person “yields to the enticing of the Holy Spirit . . . and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19). Atonement and reconciliation with God allow and evoke forgiveness and reconciliation among people.

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CELIA HOKANSON

CONTRIBUTOR

Edited and published independently by Junius F. Wells, the founder of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA; renamed YOUNG MEN in 1977), the Contributor (1879–1896) proposed “to represent the Mutual Improvement Associations, and to furnish a publication of peculiar interest to their members and to the mature youth of our people” (“Salutation,” p. 12). One of its purposes was to encourage and foster the development of literary talents among the young men and young women in the Church. It contained articles on such subjects as travel, philosophy, history, biography, and gospel topics. There were also letters from the General Authorities, conference reports, lesson outlines for the youth weekly meetings, hymns, fiction, and a little poetry.

The Contributor Company was formed on January 11, 1886, and Wells continued as editor, publisher, and business manager. But when it was purchased by the Cannon Publishing Company in 1892, Abraham H. Cannon became the editor and publisher. Cannon died suddenly in July 1896, and the Contributor ceased publication with the October issue.

In November 1897 the general board of the YMMIA launched an official magazine, the Improvement Era (1897–1970).

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PETREA GILLESPIE KELLY

CONVERSION

From its beginnings to the present day, the Church has had a strong missionary orientation. It teaches that conversion is essentially a process of repentance and personal spiritual experience (see testimony; religious experience; joining the Church).

THE NATURE OF CONVERSION. A number of theories have been advanced by sociologists to explain why people are likely to convert to another religious denomination. Glenn M. Vernon indicated that conversion involves several subprocesses, which must be accounted for, including (1) the manner in which the convert becomes aware of the group possessing the ideology; (2) the acceptance of new religious definitions; and (3) the integration of the new convert into the group. John Lofland and Rodney Stark proposed that conversion is a problem-solving process in which the individual uses organizational facilities, programs, and ideologies to resolve various life problems. More recently, David A. Snow, Louis A. Zurcher, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson have emphasized structural proximity, availability, and affective interaction with members of the new denomination as the most powerful influences in determining who will join. Roger A. Straus has proposed that religious conversion is an active accomplishment by the person who converts. Straus thinks that previous theories focus too heavily on the idea that conversion is something which happens to a person as a result of circumstances external to himself. Similarly, C.
David Gartrell and Zane K. Shannon propose that conversion should be characterized as a rational choice based on the recruit’s evaluation of the social and cognitive outcomes of converting or not converting.

Recovery from crisis, social proximity to members of the Church, and personal problem solving are certainly involved to some extent in at least some conversions. However, research about people who have converted to many churches, (Snow and Phillips; Heirich) including The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Seggar and Kunz), has failed to provide much support for the problem-solving theory of Lolland and Stark. Research by David A. Snow and Cynthia L. Phillips and by Max Heirich provides more evidence of the influence of social networks in conversion.

Most scientific theories, however, lack any significant reference to the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT in conversion, which is the dominant element in the Latter-day Saint understanding of conversion. The visitation of Jesus Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9) does not fit into any secular theoretical categories. Paul was not seeking a new faith to solve problems in his life. He did not begin to serve Christ in order to be accepted by his friends. He persecuted Christians because he thought they had fallen away from the true faith. As a religious man, he recognized the voice of God when it spoke to him.

Similar conversion stories are told in the Book of Mormon. For example, as Alma 2 and the sons of King Mosiah 2 were going about teaching that the religion of their fathers was not true, they were stopped by the angel of the Lord, who asked why they persecuted the believers. Alma 2 was struck dumb and fell to the ground unable to move. While his father and others fasted and prayed in his behalf for two days and two nights, Alma 2 suffered excruciating pains and torment and finally called upon Jesus Christ for mercy to take away his sins. Immediately, the pain left and his soul was filled with exquisite joy (Alma 36:6–22). Alma arose and proclaimed that he had been reborn through the spirit of the Lord. Alma and the sons of Mosiah spent the rest of their lives preaching of Christ and doing many good works (Mosiah 27:8–31; cf. the spiritual rebirth of the people of Zarahemla at the time of King Benjamin in Mosiah 4–5).

Most conversions are not as dramatic as those of Paul and Alma 2 and the sons of Mosiah. The conversion of Alma 1 is closer to the kind experienced by most people who join the Church (Mosiah 17:2–4; 18:1). When Abinadi called him and the other priests of the wicked king Noah to repentance, Alma 1 knew in his heart that Abinadi spoke the truth. He repented of his sins and began to keep the commandments, with which he was already basically familiar. This wrought a significant change in his life.

From these and other scriptural accounts of the conversion process, it is evident that conversion "implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teaching but also a motivating faith in him and his gospel—a faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one's understanding of life's meaning and in his allegiance to God—in interest, in thought, and in conduct" (Romney, p. 1065). Conversion involves a newness of life, which is effected by receiving divine forgiveness that remits sins (see BORN OF GOD). It is characterized by a determination to do good continually, forsaking all sins, and by the healing of the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit, being filled with peace and joy (cf. Romney, p. 1066).

The Process of Conversion to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The three subprocesses proposed by Vernon fit quite well the three most obvious aspects of conversion to the Church. The first is “the manner in which the convert becomes aware of the group possessing the ideology.” This corresponds to what is referred to in LDS missionary circles as “finding.” People come into contact with missionaries in many ways. The most effective source is referral by current Church members who invite friends or family relatives to meet with the missionaries to be taught about the gospel. A second way is for missionaries to knock on doors to invite people to learn about the Church. They also may talk with people they meet on the street or in any other form of normal social contact. Missionaries occasionally set up booths at fairs or expositions. The Church has advertised through the broadcast and print media, offering Church literature. It also operates several VISITORS CENTERS, usually associated with a Church temple or historical site. Two of the best known are Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, and at historic Nauvoo, Illinois. All these visitors centers offer interested people the opportunity to accept teaching visits by missionaries.

The second of Vernon’s subprocesses—ac-
acceptance of new religious definitions—corresponds to the second major missionary activity, teaching. Missionaries teach the basic principles of God’s plan of salvation. They invite those they teach to learn more by studying the Bible and the Book of Mormon on their own. They encourage, inform, teach, and testify. Study is an important part of the conversion process, for the mind plays a role as the investigator learns to understand and ponder the wisdom, logic, and ethic of gospel principles. As B. H. Roberts once stated, “It is frequently the case that a proper setting-forth of a subject makes its truth self-evident. . . . To be known, the truth must be stated and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true” (Vol. 2, pp. vi–vii).

Prospective converts are invited to seek through prayer a spiritual witness from the Holy Ghost to let them know the truth. As Roberts stated regarding the Book of Mormon, “[The Holy Ghost] must ever be the chief source of evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. No arrangement of evidence, however skillfully ordered; no argument, however adroitly made, can ever take its place” (pp. vi–vii). A quotation from the Book of Mormon is generally used to invite the prospective convert to seek this spiritual manifestation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and of the gospel message: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moro. 10:4).

Most converts to the Church do not seem to have personal characteristics that predispose them to conversion. While those who begin looking into the Church tend to be younger than the average population and tend somewhat more often to be women, these factors do not predict who will ultimately accept BAPTISM. Those who seek baptism do not tend to have more personal problems than those who do not, nor do they differ significantly from others in personality traits or personal dispositions.

Conversion to the Church is usually not precipitous. The process begins with the first signs of interest, and may continue for many years, even after baptism. It is not simply a matter of accepting and believing the teachings of the Church. Many who do accept baptism indicate that they do not fully understand the teachings, but that they have come to feel that accepting baptism is the right thing to do. Most of them achieve a more complete understanding and acceptance of Church doctrine as they become integrated into membership. Such integration is the third process mentioned by Vernon (see FELLOWSHIPPING).

Becoming a member of the Church has broader implications than simply adopting a new set of religious beliefs. For many new members it means adopting a new lifestyle quite different from the one to which they were accustomed. For nearly all new members, it also means that they become part of a new social network of friends and acquaintances. In some cases, the new Church member is rejected and ostracized by family and former friends. This social transition is made easier if the new convert has previously developed friends and acquaintances among members of the Church.

MISSIONARY WORK IN THE CHURCH. Those who have been converted usually want to share their newfound understanding with others (cf. Perry, pp. 16–18). Paul, Alma₁, and Alma₂ passionately taught the truth of Christ’s saving mission throughout the remainder of their lives following their conversions. To the convert who loves people, there is a balance to be achieved between having genuine tolerance for the beliefs of others and fulfilling the desire and obligation to share with them the joy of conversion. The major Jewish and Christian religions have gone through phases when the proselytizing spirit was dominant and other periods when the desire to proselytize was restrained (Marty and Greenspahn).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has actively proselytized from its beginnings. Its leaders and members have accepted a mandate to proclaim the restored gospel to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6; D&C 133:37), to all who will listen. Soon after the formal organization of the Church, Samuel Smith, a brother of Joseph Smith, traveled from place to place offering the Book of Mormon to any who would receive it. Missionaries were soon bringing in converts from the United States, Canada, England, Scandinavia, and Western Europe.
After the main body of members moved to the Intermountain West, the missionary work continued. Increasingly the missionary responsibility was given to young men who had not yet married. Their converts continued to migrate to the American West until well into the twentieth century, in spite of the fact that around the turn of the century Church leaders began to encourage converts to remain where they were and to build up the Church in their homelands.

The Church growth rate since 1860 has never been less than 30 percent for any ten-year period. Since 1950, Church growth has accelerated (see Vital Statistics), advancing to more than 50 percent in each ten-year period from 1950 to 1980 (Cowan).

In recent years the Church has become less and less a church confined to the western United States. As late as 1960, more than half of Church members were located in the Intermountain West, with only 10 percent outside the United States. In 1980, nearly one-third of Church members lived outside the United States, with only about 40 percent in the Intermountain West. In 1989 less than one convert in four was an American citizen.

By far the greatest convert growth outside the United States has been in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Argentina (see South America). There has also been considerable increase in the number of baptisms in Asia and the Philippines. In 1979 there were three missions in the Philippines; this increased to twelve by 1990, and the number of convert baptisms per year tripled in that same period (see Asia). New missions were opened in eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990. In 1990 the Church had more than 40,000 full-time missionaries in 257 missions around the world.

Latter-day Saints believe, as stated by President Marion G. Romney: it may be that "relatively few among the billions of earth’s inhabitants will be converted. Nevertheless . . . there is no other means by which the sin-sick souls of men can be healed or for a troubled world to find peace" (p. 1067).

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KAY H. SMITH

COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT
See: Economic History of the Church

CORRELATION OF THE CHURCH, ADMINISTRATION
Correlation is the process of identifying the role of each part of the Church, placing each in its proper relationship to the others, and ensuring that each functions properly. The parts include doctrines and ordinances, organizations and agencies, programs and activities, meetings, and printed and audiovisual materials. All of these parts should be “fitly framed together” (Eph. 2:21). They function properly when they are connected systematically and operate in harmony and unity. Like the parts of a human body, each has its function, none is