

February 11, 1992

To whom it may concern,

Since I have returned home from my service as a missionary in the Guatemala City North Mission, I have been unable to put to rest some concerns I have felt relative to certain challenges that I experienced while serving there. Though my mind is filled with some extremely positive memories regarding my mission experience, it is also weighed down with a burden that has been hard to bear. At the risk of being thought of as an "ark steedier," I would like to report to you some of the problems that I experienced personally during my eighteen months of missionary work in Guatemala.

In January of 1989 the La Laguna Zone, consisting of about eighteen missionaries, baptized 128 people. The zone leaders alone baptized over forty people that month. Unfortunately, there was not one complete family among those 128 people brought into the church. Instead, almost all of them were very young individuals, most between the ages of seven and twelve (I say seven because Arturo Mijangos, a church administrator in the Area Office, told me that some seven year-olds were accidentally being baptized by over-zealous missionaries). A few months later, while I was in the mission office, I looked over these baptismal records and confirmed that only a handful of those 128 were adults.

As my time in the mission progressed, I was able to become companions with some of the elders who had served in

that zone. They were usually more than willing to describe to me the methods they used to achieve such a high baptismal rate. It was rather disheartening to hear these accounts.

One of the methods employed was initiated by the zone leaders around October or November of 1988. They would go out to a soccer field and begin to play "futbol" with the youngsters who were hanging around there. After an hour or so, these zone leaders would say to the young people, "Hey guys...want to go over to the church and cool off?" Then they would ask these children their names and birthdays, put them in white clothes, line them up, and proceed to baptize them. They would usually do so without missionary discussions, interviews, church attendance, parental permission, an opening or closing hymn or prayer, or fellowshiping by a church member. It appeared that these young people had not even expressed a true desire to be baptized.

I was called to serve in this same area about a year after these elders had left. I noticed that out of the hundreds of children who were baptized during those few months, only a handful were attending church. Some of the parents in the neighborhood, once they had found out that their children had been baptized into a foreign religion without their permission, became very upset. After this, these adults would often scream angrily at the LDS missionaries as they walked down the street and knocked on doors.

Feeling assured that those zone leaders had acted inappropriately and would eventually be punished for their methods, it was interesting for me to discover that less than two months after their transfer from that zone, they were both called to be assistants to the president. And with that, what was once a rare phenomenon confined to a particular zone, soon became the mission norm as similar practices were followed during the remainder of my months in the mission. Baptism became a method by which one progressed up the leadership ladder. Quality (the legitimacy of baptism) was seldom, if ever an issue. We were taught by the president himself to find your "golden family" in the morning, and to baptize them that afternoon.

A series of incentives were set up to encourage the missionaries to baptize. Here were a few of them:

1. Missionaries with seven baptisms or more in a month were given a certificate signed by the president at the beginning of each zone conference.
2. Missionaries with ten baptisms or more in a month were given a cassette tape of Janice Kapp Perry's songs sung in Spanish.
3. A monthly newsletter was sent out, listing the names of all companionships that had baptized ten or more the previous month.
4. A party was held once a month on P-Day, and only the companionships who had baptized seven or more the previous month were allowed to attend.
5. Every month the president himself would take the highest baptizing zone out, at the expense of the mission, to eat at a fancy restaurant.
6. Even permission to attend the temple as a zone was used as an incentive to encourage baptisms.

We (as a mission) didn't care much about families, activity rate, or even conversion. What we were most concerned with was "selling the product"--meeting our goals, and climbing up the leadership ladder. I even talked to missionaries who admitted baptizing drunkards and retarded people to help reach their monthly goals.

When I voiced my concerns to the president, he told me not to worry about it. He assured me that we were planting important seeds, and that even if these people remained inactive and never really had testimonies, we were initiating a process that someday would sprout and blossom.

Even the missionaries themselves developed various rationales which, in my opinion, helped them to calm their troubled consciences and to justify their actions. I was often told by fellow missionaries, "Who am I to deny them a baptism? If they want it, even if they haven't met all the requirements, it is my responsibility to give it to them." The interesting thing is that many of the investigators, in my opinion, really didn't desire to be baptized, but instead were pressured into baptism through the use of modern-day, high pressure sales techniques. On rare instances, some elders would even lead the investigators to believe that they would receive material benefits upon baptism (such as church welfare and other forms of economic assistance). One elder that I talked to told me of a missionary he replaced in Peten who even went as far as to offer U.S. citizenship

to a gentleman in exchange for baptism. This promise was never kept, of course.

Another disturbing rationalization employed by fellow missionaries to justify baptizing ill-prepared individuals was: "Well, if they don't get baptized in this life, then we'll have to do their temple work for them anyway, so we might as well do it for them now and get it over with."

Elder Ballard came down in March of 1989, apparently to stop what was going on. He basically called the missionaries to repentance and established a firm rule that no one was to be baptized until all six discussions had been received. He also established the policy that investigators had to attend church at least twice before they could be baptized. A lot of missionaries felt bad because they had been baptizing people inappropriately, and some of them even repented for what they had done. Unfortunately, the effects soon wore off.

Initially our president supported Elder Ballard, and encouraged the missionaries to obey the rules he established, but as time went on and the number of baptisms began to decrease, slowly the standards were let down. First our president would say, "No one can be baptized without meeting the requirements set by Elder Ballard, unless I personally authorize it." After awhile permission could be granted by the Assistants to the President (AP's), then the Zone Leaders (ZL's), then the District Leaders (DL's), then we were back to normal.

To explain the need for relaxing some of Elder Ballard's newly-established rules, our president told us a story in Zone Conference of a somewhat elderly man who was willing to get baptized, but wasn't able to do so because he had not yet received all of the discussions. When this man unexpectedly passed away, the president remarked, "What a tragedy! Now we are going to have to go and do his temple work, when we could have baptized him while he was alive!" He used this story repeatedly to justify our baptizing people before they had received all six of the standard missionary discussions, and had attended church at least twice.

The primary goal that our president established in our mission was for every companionship to baptize at least once a month. There were always four AP's called in our mission at any given time to assist in achieving this goal. During a given month, two assistants would stay in the capital close to the mission home to assist the president, and two would travel around to the remote regions of the mission and visit the various areas in which baptisms had not yet been performed. Upon arriving in such an area, these "traveling AP's" would ask to visit the investigators of the companionships, and literally attempt to compel these investigators to be baptized on that day, at that moment. They would use any form of pressure or persuasion available (such as presents of chocolate, gum, or ice cream) to

convince these people to be baptized. I know this because I was a first-hand witness on several occasions.

During the month of March, 1990, towards the end of my mission, there were a few companions in my zone who had not yet had a baptism. After giving me a harsh reprimand during a zone conference interview, the president told me to plan on going with the AP's the following day to see how a good mission leader should encourage an elder to achieve success with his stewardship. The president even instructed me to call ahead to the missionaries in the two areas that hadn't baptized yet, and have them fill up the font in preparation for the AP's visit.

The following day, I was picked up by the AP's. On the way towards our destination, I was informed that they had been instructed by the president to take me to the two "unproductive" areas in my zone (Fraijanes and Barberanas), and to find someone to baptize in each area that day. In Fraijanes, the AP's tried to persuade and to pressure the investigators to be baptized, but their usually convincing rhetoric wasn't successful. In what I perceived at the time to be a state of panic, they drove up to a remote, isolated shack on a hill, found an eighty year old partially blind lady without shoes, and literally brought her in a somewhat forceful manner to the van, and placed her in it. Then, they drove to a trail, walked her down the twenty minute path towards the river (she was praying to Mary on the way down), had her strip down and change into her baptismal

clothes in front of all the townspeople who were washing their clothes in the river, and baptized her. There were no discussions, no interview, no song, no talk, no members, and no previous church attendance.

After the baptism these same AP's located the nearest telephone, called the mission president, and said, "President, we have witnessed a miracle today."

I was so troubled by this that a week later, I set up an interview with the president to confess what I had seen on that day. Instead of showing alarm or concern for what was going on, he began to literally yell at me for not supporting my leaders, for kicking against the pricks, and for having a bad attitude. Accusing me of trying to destroy the mission, he reprimanded me in a way never before done by anyone in my life, and sent me on my way.

A few days later I was informed that though my companion had two more months in the area than I did, I would be transferred. At the transfer conference the president interviewed me, and told me that after interviewing the two AP's involved, he decided that they were in the right, that I had a problem in not supporting my leaders, and that if I ever "rebelled" like this again he would relieve me of my position as zone leader.

I had been struggling for over a year with a severe asthma condition. The area in which I was then serving was one of the few areas in the mission in which I could work and breathe at the same time. That very day, however, I was

transferred (in exile it seemed) to one of the most impoverished, dusty, polluted areas in the mission. Uspantan, Quiche was an eleven hour bus ride through the mountains of Guatemala, and six hours from the nearest phone. It seemed to me as though I had been sent there to be kept quiet, and to be punished for my "disobedience and rebellion."

Regardless of the motivation for transferring me to that area, within a week I was very ill and utterly unable to breathe. I was taking over three or four anti-asthma pills and using an inhaler about three or four times a day just to keep breathing. The first day, my companion informed me that the traveling AP's had also visited his area the previous month. They had played basketball with two teenage boys, and on the same day had baptized them without any missionary discussions. The next week these young boys were hanging out in the town bars as usual, letting the townspeople know that the first Mormons in Uspantan didn't hold their covenants seriously.

After one month of trying to work under these adverse and potentially damaging health conditions, I called the president let him know that my lungs would not permit me to remain in that area anymore, due to my illness. The next day I was on a plane home. I couldn't help but think that in some way he was trying to get rid of me, so as to insure that I not "mess up" the fact that, according to him, our's was the second highest baptizing mission in the church.

Though I was quite sad to leave under those circumstances, I felt a great sense of relief on that plane ride home. It was as if a monumental burden had been lifted from my shoulders.

The Guatemala City North mission had an average of over 650 baptisms a month during my eighteen months as a missionary there. That's 11,700 people brought into the church in an area one third the size of Tennessee. Unfortunately, it was my experience that less than 15% of those people baptized during my service there remained active after the first few months. I know of missionaries who baptized over 200 people during their two years but who now perceive that very few (if any) of the new members were active by the time the missionaries were ready to go home.

After returning home, I was transferred to the Tempe, Arizona mission under President Durrel Woolsey, who at that time had just been called to be a General Authority. One day I asked for a special interview, and told him the story of my Guatemala mission. Immediately he called the missionary office in Salt Lake, and related to them what I had reported. When he returned, his only response was, "They said that they wish they could have known sooner, but since your former president is going home in a few months, there's really nothing that they can do."

After being released from my mission in Arizona, I returned to Provo to finish up my studies at BYU. A few months into the semester I went to visit my first mission

president in Salt Lake City. I was truly interested to hear how his last few months in Guatemala turned out, and what his thoughts were regarding the unfortunate circumstances that resulted in my being transferred to Arizona. Though he did express to me that he felt it unfortunate that I had to be sent home early, it surprised me to hear that due to his overwhelming "success" as a mission president, he is now sitting as an advisor to the missionary board for the church. As you can imagine, this came as quite a shock to me.

But though it may appear that my criticisms are aimed at him, the truth is that my intentions are not to harm either him or his family. Just as he was not a perfect mission president, I too was far from a perfect missionary. What I take issue with are the methods [used by missionaries to produce baptism statistics] by which people were baptized in my mission, and the inability of anyone presiding over the mission president to insure compliance with the established baptismal guidelines. Since returning from my mission, I have spoken with several returned missionaries who have had similar experiences in Chile, Mexico, and Brazil, as well as in England, Japan, and the United States. As I hear them relate to me how much of a struggle it has been for them to deal with the same problems that I have tried to deal with, my desire to somehow instigate a change, or at least more awareness, in this aspect of the missionary program only increases.

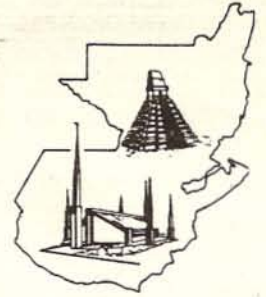
If there is one favor that I could ask, it would be for someone to please let me know what is being done, or what I CAN DO, to help prevent this from happening again in this church that I love so dearly. Please let me know what to do.

Sincerely,

John Parkinson Dehlin
31 Waterwood
Huntsville, TX 77340
(409) 891-5069

P.S. Several missionaries who served with me in Guatemala (including Elders Wade Anundson, Damon Farrimond, Dale Aston, Eric Espenson, David Graham, and James Sanderson) have read this essay, and have expressed a willingness to sign it in support of the notion that the experiences and feelings I have expressed herein are both accurate and legitimate.

LA IGLESIA DE
JESUCRISTO
DE LOS SANTOS
DE LOS ULTIMOS
DIAS



MISION CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA NORTE

Apartado Postal 332-A 01909
Guatemala, Guatemala, C. A.

Guatemala 14 de febrero de 1989

INFORME DE LA MISION PARA ENERO:

Queridos Misioneros y Miembros:

Es un verdadero gozo saber que el Señor nos bendice grandemente y el privilegio que tenemos de servir en esta Obra Grande y Maravillosa, con gran alegría compartimos las Bendiciones de nuestro Eterno Padre.

Trabajamos duro con el Espíritu del Señor con Amor para todos. La Mision tuvo el grán privilegio de Bautizar a 629 hijos escogidos. Agradecemos su ayuda y con sus oraciones lograremos todas las Bendiciones que deseamos.

La Mision Bautizó a 103 familias completas, 97 hombres mayores de 18 años y 97% de Misioneros Bautizó.

Felicitaciones a los Misioneros que lograron la meta de Diez Bautismos por compañerismo.

MISIONEROS QUE LOGRARON LA META DEL SEÑOR:

Z.L. Elder Daines/Samayoa*	38	Hna Roberts/Masaya	12
Z.L. Elder Arenas/Rougk	31	Hna. Jorgerson/Wagner	12
Elder Teters/Hopkinson	23	Hna. Reeder/Galvez	12
Elder Aston/Ramos R.	23	Hna. Ramirez/Julian/Lowry	11
Elder Barrios/Bethers	16	Elder Ruiz/Nielson	11
Elder Cuyuch/Bailey	16	Elder Salazar/Graham	10
Elder Borchert/Saso*	15	Elder Ixcot/Allred	10
Z.L. Elder Brady/Herrera*	14	Elder Heileson/Muñoz	10
Elder Espinoza/Martineau	14	Elder Barker/Freddy/Ashby	10
Elder Robertson/Bartolomew/Mendoza	13	Elder Chavez/Morton	10
Elder Miranda/Robinson	12	Elder Piterson/Donis	10
Elder Velasquez G./Coleman	12	Elder Cruz/Valle C./Gonzalez	10
		Elder Cuyuch M./Calel	10

* Hand up as A.P's.

BARRIOS Y RAMAS QUE LOGRARON LA META DEL SEÑOR:

Barrio Colombia	50	Barrio Tres	12
Barrio Gallito	45	Barrio Maya I	12
Barrio Alameda	41	Rama Chiquimula II	12
Barrio Santa Rosita	26	Barrio La Esperanza	11
Rama Santa Elena	23	Barrio Kennedy	11
Barrio Lomas del Norte	22	Barrio Bethania	10
Barrio Cinco	16	Rama Coban II	10
Rama Azuncion Mita	14	Rama Zacapa III	10
Barrio La Laguna	13	Rama Zacapa II	10
Barrio Parroquia	12	Rama Puerto Barrios	10
		Rama Camlun	10

REPORTE MENSUAL DE BAUTISMOS POR ESTACA Y DISTRITOS
MISION CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA NORTE

MES DE ENERO AÑO 1989

ESTACA/DISTRITO	TOTAL MES	AÑO	ESTACA/DISTRITO	TOTAL MES	AÑO	ESTACA/DISTRITO	TOTAL MES	AÑO
ESTACA ATLANTICO	100	100	ESTACA LAS VICTORIAS	56	56	ESTACA CENTRAL	125	125
Barrio Esperanza	11	11	Barrio Cipresales	7	7	Barrio Asuncion	7	7
Barrio Maya I	12	12	Barrio Molino	5	5	Barrio 5	16	16
Barrio Maya II	—	—	Barrio 3	12	12	Barrio 8	6	6
Barrio Atlantico	9	9	Barrio 11	6	6	Barrio 10	6	6
Rama Canalitos	—	—	Rama El Quintanal	—	—	Barrio Central	1	1
Rama Llano Largo	—	—	Barrio Parroquia	12	12	Barrio Gallito	45	45
Rama Sanarate	7	7	Barrio Marti	4	4	Rama Centro	8	8
Rama Los Pinos	2	2	Rama Sion	3	3	Barrio Bethania	10	10
Rama Limon	6	6	Rama Jocotales	4	4	Barrio Santa Rosita	26	26
Rama La Leyenda	8	8	Rama Durazno	3	3			
Rama Lonas del Norte	22	22				DISTRITO JALAPA	23	23
Rama Santa Elena	23	23	ESTACA GUATEMALA	34	34	Rama Jalapa I	5	5
			Barrio 2	3	3	Rama Jalapa II	4	4
ESTACA LA LAGUNA	124	124	Barrio Guajitos	5	5	Rama Jutiapa I	—	—
Barrio La Laguna	13	13	Barrio Nimajuyu I	3	3	Rama Jutiapa II	—	—
Barrio Alameda	41	41	Barrio Nimajuyu II	2	2	Rama Asuncion Mita	14	14
Barrio Colombia	50	50	Barrio Obelisco	4	4			
Barrio Kennedy	11	11	Barrio Vista Hermosa	4	4	DISTRITO COBAN	37	37
Barrio Paraiso	9	9	Barrio J. R. B.	4	4	Rama Coban I	5	5
			Rama Barberena	2	2	Rama Coban II/III	10/210/2	
DISTRITO PETEN	11	11	Rama Cuilapa	4	4	Rama Los Campos	2	2
Rama Flores	1	1	Rama La Laguna Seca	—	—	Rama Cartha	1	1
Rama San Benito	3	3	Rama Ciudad Real	2	2	Rama Tanchi	—	—
Rama La Libertad	—	—				Rama San Juan Chameico	1	1
Rama Macanche	—	—	DISTRITO ZACAPA	57	57	Rama Chicoc	7	7
Rama Poptun	7	7	Rama Zacapa I	3	3	Rama Salama	3	3
			Rama Zacapa II	10	10	Rama San Cristobal	3	3
DISTRITO EL ESTOR	58	58	Rama Chiquimula I	—	—	Rama Tac Tic	3	3
Rama Canlun	10	10	Rama Chiquimula II	12	12	Rama Valparaiso	—	—
Rama Chulac	—	—	Rama Teculutun	1	1			
Rama El Estor	7	7	Rama Gualan	6	6	DISTRITO DE LA MISION	4	4
Rama La Tinta	9	9	Rama Ipala	1	1	Rama Sta. Catarina Pinula	4	4
Rama Panzos	2	2	Rama Los Amates	4	4			
Rama Sacsuha	8	8	Rama Morales	—	—			
Rama Santo Domingo	2	2	Rama Puerto Barrios	10	10			
Rama Seasirs	—	—	Rama III	10	10			
Rama Senahu I	3	3						
Rama Senahu II	8	8						
Rama Sepamec	—	—						
Rama Telemen	1	1						
Rama Tucuru/Pachilla	8	8						

PROMEDIOS DE BAUTISMOS POR MISIONERO DE CADA ZONA:

La Laguna	8.9	Victorias I	2.4
Central I	5.8	Coban	2.4
Central II	5.5	Jalapa	2.3
Atlantico II	4.3	Victorias II	2.2
Zacapa I	3.5	Polochic II	2.1
Polochic I	3.1	Guatemala I	2.0
Atlantico I	2.9	Guatemala II	1.8
Zacapa II	2.6	Peten	1.4
		El Campo	1.2

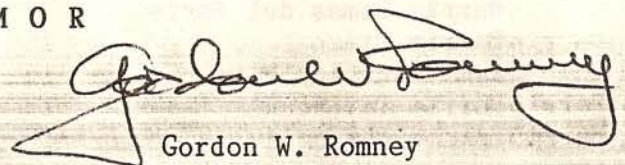
ORDEN DE EXITO POR ESTACA Y DISTRITO:

Estaca Central	125	Estaca las Victorias	56
Estaca La Laguna	124	Distrito Coban	38
Estaca Atlantico	100	Estaca Guatemala	38
Distrito El Estor	58	Distrito Jalapa	23
Distrito Zacapa	56	Distrito Peten	11

Que el Señor nos Bendiga a cada uno de nosotros, para lograr la meta Misional por compañerismo, mas de DIEZ conversos cada mes.

ii Estupendo!!

CON AMOR



Gordon W. Romney
Presidente

LA MISION DE GUATEMALA NORTE

CERTIFICADO OTORGADO A:

ELDER JOHN PARKINSON DEHLIN

Por su dedicación realizada en la obra misional de
La IGLESIA de JESUCRISTO de los SANTOS
de los ULTIMOS DIAS

Logrando un promedio de: 3.0 bautismos por misionero
en el mes de ENERO de 1989

"Por tanto, Yo, el Señor, os hago esta
pregunta: ¿A qué se os ordenó?

A predicar mi Evangelio por el Espíritu.
Si, el Consolador que fue enviado para
enseñar la verdad". (D. y C. 50:13-14)

Zona: LAS VICTORIAS


PRESIDENTE DE MISION

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Council of the Twelve
47 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

June 8, 1992

Mr. John P. Dehlin
31 Waterwood
Huntsville, Texas 77340

Dear Brother Dehlin:

I write to report what was done with your memo of February 11, 1992.

Following our phone conversation, I copied the memo and shared it with the members of the Council of the Twelve. What happens now is up to them. As I advised you on the telephone, it is quite possible that some of them would hand it to someone in a Church department, or take steps on their own to investigate this matter. I think it quite likely that your memo may be of assistance in the instruction given at the forthcoming mission president's seminar.

Thank you for sharing this very valuable information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dallin H. Oaks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dallin H. Oaks

dd

cc: Professor F. Lamond Tullis

Dallin H. Oaks

Date: 6/25/92

To: John P. Dehlin

For your information, I am
sending you a copy of the
talk I gave at the Mission
President's Seminar this week.

Dallin H. Oaks

(Part I is an edited version
of talks given at the MTC on
June 27, 1986 and June 26, 1987)

Missionary Training Center
Devotional Message
(for Missionaries and Mission Presidents)
Tuesday Evening, June 23, 1992

"BAPTISM, THE ATONEMENT, AND
THE DOCTRINAL BASIS OF MISSIONARY WORK"

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

My dear brothers and sisters: It is my assignment and privilege to speak to you about missionary work and the Atonement. I have titled my message, "The Doctrinal Basis of Missionary Work."

If missionaries and mission leaders understand why we do missionary work, this will provide a firm foundation for all that they do, and it will answer many questions before they need to be asked.

I.

The doctrinal basis of missionary work is contained in the Savior's statement to Nicodemus:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

The "kingdom of God" referred to here is the celestial kingdom.

Mission presidents and missionaries may be surprised that in characterizing the doctrinal basis of missionary work I did not quote the great commandment the risen Lord gave to his disciples: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19), or "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We are obviously under the discipline of this command. But the command to teach all nations tells us what we must do. The doctrinal basis for missionary work explains why we teach and preach.

It is significant that both of the synoptic gospels which record the command to teach all nations and to preach to every creature, Matthew and Mark, follow this command with the Savior's explanation of why we are commanded to teach and preach. Mark's account gives the doctrinal basis for teaching and preaching in these words:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

The Risen Lord elaborated this truth to the Nephites in explaining what he called "the gospel which I have given unto you" (3 Nephi 27:13). He said:

Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day (3 Nephi 27:20).

In modern revelation, the Lord explained further:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned, and shall not come into my Father's kingdom where my Father and I am (D&C 84:74).

We do not preach and teach in order to "bring people into the Church" or to increase the membership of the Church. We do not preach and teach just to persuade people to live better lives. We honor and appreciate the many ministers and others who are involved in the kind of ministry that makes bad men good and good men better. That is important, but we offer something more. You can qualify for the terrestrial kingdom instead of the telestial kingdom without the aid of this Church. We are concerned with a higher destination.

The purpose of our missionary work is to help the children of God fulfill a condition prescribed by our Savior and Redeemer. We preach and teach in order to baptize the children of God so that they can be saved in the celestial kingdom instead of being damned in a lesser kingdom. We do missionary work in order to baptize. That is the doctrinal basis of missionary work.

We have added knowledge about Jesus Christ and his doctrine. But the uniqueness of our message is not just added knowledge. The requirement of baptism reminds us that the truths we teach are not academic. The restored gospel consists of doctrines and ordinances. We proclaim that baptism is necessary in order to redeem us from sins according to the conditions prescribed by the Redeemer, and that only the elders of this Church have the God-given authority that transforms the act of immersion

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 (Acts 2:38).

And when Cornelius and his gentile friends made the same inquiry, Peter "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

The message of the gospel and the doctrine of missionary work are the same in our day. For example, listen to the word of the Lord, given through the Prophet Joseph Smith in June 1829:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father (D&C 15:6; 16:6).

As the prophets of this dispensation have told us, the missionaries' purpose of being in the mission field "is to save souls, to baptize converts," which is to open the doors of the celestial kingdom to the sons and daughters of God.

No one else can do this.

Other churches cannot do it.

Good Christian living cannot do it.

Good faith, good desires, and good reasoning cannot do it.

Only the priesthood of God can administer a baptism that will satisfy the divine decree that "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The doctrinal basis of missionary work is the word of God, revealed in every age, that man cannot be saved in the celestial kingdom without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that the only way to lay claim to the merits of that atonement is to follow the command of its author: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38). You are called to assist in this great effort.

II.

Up to now, I have spoken only of the goal of baptisms, without any reference to the methods used to reach that goal. To avoid misunderstandings, I must speak of methods. It is imperative that we not slip into the error made by some missionaries and

a few mission presidents of assuming that we seek any baptisms and that the holy end justifies any means to attain it.

The baptism we seek is only the baptism that follows sincere repentance. The baptism we seek is only the baptism that is part of a conscious coming unto Christ. The baptism we seek is only the baptism that signifies a deliberate decision "to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people" (Mosiah 18:8), and to bear the burdens Alma describes in the 18th chapter of Mosiah. Alma concludes those verses by characterizing baptism "as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you" (Mosiah 18:10).

There is no room in our doctrine or our missionary procedures for us to take persons who have not repented and made a decision to come unto Christ and immerse them in water just to meet statistical goals or to win recognition from other missionaries or from our mission leaders. This will rarely happen if we follow the direction of the First Presidency on the teaching of all six lessons and the investigator's attending Church and being carefully interviewed prior to baptism.

Missionaries, mission leaders, follow the directions of our leaders. Stay anchored to your Missionary Guide and the approved procedures taught here in the Missionary Training Center. Don't impose your "improvements" on the Lord's work. For example, don't substitute your proven sales techniques for the approved methods of teaching the gospel. The gospel is not a product, missionary work is not a sales campaign, and missionary teaching is not a sales presentation. Banish "sales" and its methods from your vocabulary and your practices. Remember, the Lord's work must be done in the Lord's way.

The Lord's way is to teach his gospel and to minister to his children out of love for him and for them, not to win any recognition or advantage for ourselves. Those who seem to do the Lord's work but actually work for personal gain or recognition are guilty of priestcraft, which the Book of Mormon defines as "that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion" (2 Nephi 26:29). That was Nephi's definition. Centuries later, Alma recorded an outbreak of priestcraft in his time and described it as being practiced by those who "loved the vain things of the world," and who preached their doctrines "for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16). If it is priestcraft to preach for the sake of honors, it is surely priestcraft to perform sacred ordinances for that purpose.

Mission presidents, missionaries, don't pervert the sacred things of the Lord by preaching and baptizing for the sake of the honors of men, including personal recognition and advancement.

Of course, we record baptisms, since we are commanded to do so, but please understand that baptisms are not our only measure of missionary work. We also keep track of baptisms on a comparative basis, since comparative records among missionaries and missions similarly situated are a useful measure if properly used. I can assure you that at the headquarters of the Church we are aware that we cannot compare the numbers of baptisms in Denmark with those in Mexico. The receptivity of the people is very different in these two missions, just as it is in other areas we could compare throughout the world. On a trip a few years ago, I heard a comment on that difference. It was a slogan the missionaries used in Denmark to encourage their efforts in their tracting. "Elders, get out and get on the doors. Remember, every time you knock on a door in Denmark, someone is baptized in Mexico."

Comparative figures on baptisms can alert us to problems. If we compare two sets of baptismal figures in areas or among missionaries similarly situated and baptisms are significantly higher or lower in one than another, we want to ask some questions.

If baptisms are significantly higher in one area than in several other areas similarly situated, we want to ask whether they are following the approved missionary programs. The experiences of great missionaries like Ammon among the Lamanites and Heber C. Kimball in England show us that among a receptive people we can have large numbers of baptisms of true converts. However, we also know from experience that missionaries who do not follow our missionary procedures can also have large numbers of baptisms. This can even be done without the hard work invested by those who follow the rules and have fewer baptisms. We know that some missionaries and a few mission presidents have trifled with sacred things by encouraging or acquiescing in missionary methods that have produced baptisms that are added to the statistics but cannot properly be classified as sacred ordinances following repentance and a conscious decision to come unto Christ.

If baptisms are significantly lower in one area than in several other areas similarly situated, we also want to ask whether they are following the approved missionary programs. Are the missionaries studying their language and following the gospel study program for the prescribed time? Are they observing the missionary rules, such as those governing missionary conduct and appearance? Are they using the commitment pattern? Are they working the prescribed number of hours?

Are the missionaries speaking about the gospel with all the people they meet everywhere? Or are they like the fisherman who thinks he has been fishing all day but in reality has spent most of his time getting to and from the water, eating lunch, and fussing with his equipment. Fishing success is related to how long you have your line in the water, not how long you are away from home. Some fishermen are away from home for twelve hours and have their line in the water for ten hours. Other fishermen are away from home for twelve hours and have their line in the water for only two hours.

This last type may wonder why they do not have the same success as others. The same principle applies to missionaries, whom the Master called "fishers of men."

We should also ask whether missionaries are inviting their contacts to pray, to attend Church, and to read the Book of Mormon. We should ask whether they are following up effectively with those they have taught, and whether they seek referrals after each lesson.

These are only a few of many questions we may be led to ask on the basis of comparative records of baptisms.

III.

Up to this point I have spoken as if baptism were the only saving ordinance of the gospel. Of course, there is more. The scriptures refer to the gospel of "repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins" as the "preparatory gospel" (D&C 84:26-27). These are the ordinances for which the mission president has the keys, and this is the portion of the gospel which he is responsible to administer. The ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which "holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God," in whose ordinances "the power of godliness is manifest" (D&C 84:19-20), are committed to the presidents of stakes and the presidents of temples. Our missionary work, as the scriptures note, is preparatory to the great work we refer to as the perfecting of the Saints and the redeeming of the dead.

This is why we are not focused on baptizing large numbers of individuals. We want to baptize families. We want to grow from centers of strength. Missionaries must be concerned with their converts' transition to active, full membership. Missionaries are also involved in reactivation efforts.

The proclaiming of the gospel does not stand independent of perfecting the Saints or redeeming the dead, nor they of it. All three are harmonious parts of one unified mission of the Church. Missionary work must be done so as to "establish" the Lord's church. In this way, the baptism of one person leads on to the perfecting of that Saint, to the sealing ordinances of the holy temple, and to the redeeming of his or her dead ancestors. We must conduct our missionary work in that spirit of unity and wholeness. Baptisms are not enough.

As missionaries, we follow in the footsteps of Paul, the great apostle whose missionary labors are more fully recorded than any missionary of ancient times.

From those scriptural accounts, we know that Paul put the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ ahead of every personal and worldly consideration. He was "not ashamed

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
THE QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
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January 29, 2002

John Dehlin
Evangelism Manager
Microsoft Corp
One Microsoft Way
Redmond WA 98052-6399

Dear Brother Dehlin:

On my flight to Asia (from which I have just returned) you left me a letter while I was sleeping. Since I did not get a chance to respond on the plane, hurrying to the next flight, I use this means to respond and to thank you for that gracious message.

I remember your letter very well. It was of great concern to me, and alerted me to conditions I needed to understand, though my capacity to correct them at that point was very limited. Ever since that time I have never spoken to missionaries without stressing the fact that we want real conversions and that they should not consider their "success" to be linked to the exercise of the agency of others. I believe mission presidents get into trouble when they give missionaries goals for baptisms (dependent on the agency of the investigators) rather than goals for what the missionary can do himself or herself.

I was glad to know that our communications had been helpful to you, and that you are happily married and the father of three beautiful daughters and currently serving as a seminary teacher in the Bellevue Washington Stake. Thanks also for the work you are doing with BYU's business school.

You have my best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dallin H. Oaks", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dallin H. Oaks

DHO/mm

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE

Elder John Parkinson Dehlin

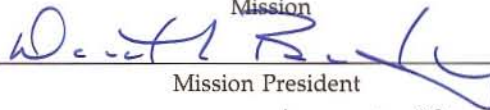
Missionary

This certifies that you are honorably released from your appointment as a missionary in this mission. No greater service can be rendered than to labor faithfully for the salvation of the souls of men. The gratitude of those who have been the beneficiaries of your voluntary, generous labors will ever be a source of satisfaction and inspiration to you.

May the joy that comes from the conscientious performance of the duties of this high calling ever abide with you and inspire you with a constant devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ARIZONA TEMPE MISSION

Mission



Mission President

August 22, 1990

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS