

СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ

“A SUPERVISORY TYPE OF THING”: THE ESTABLISHMENT AND IMPACT OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINT MISSION IN POSTCOLONIAL SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA*

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***Abstract.** This article analyzes the challenges that confronted the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) in establishing its official mission in southeastern Nigeria following the 1978 Priesthood Revelation, and the impact of its mission strategy on the religious and daily life of Nigerian adherents. The emergence of unofficial LDS congregations in Nigeria between the late 1940s and 1970s required the LDS Church to abandon its traditional mission focus on proselytization, and instead develop a strategy of supervision—a strategy geared towards appointing and training local church leaders, teaching adherents to be proper Latter-day Saints, and integrating congregations in the administrative hierarchy. Using documentary records and oral histories archived at the LDS Church History Library and L. Tom Perry Special Collections, this article highlights the reciprocal impact of cross-cultural encounters and the shortcomings of the LDS Church’s missionary training programs.*

***Keywords:** Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Mormonism, Religion, Christianity, Southeastern Nigeria*

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INTRODUCTION

On September 27, 1978—a mere three months after President Spencer Kimball received the Priesthood Revelation granting Black members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) the ability to hold the Priesthood—Rendell Mabey, a former president of the LDS Church’s Switzerland Mission, received an unexpected phone call from James Faust, president of the LDS Church’s International Mission, at his law practice in Salt Lake City, Utah.¹ After some small talk, Faust told Mabey: “I’m calling at the request of the First

¹ Prior to 1978, the LDS Church prohibited Black members from holding the Priesthood—the power and authority that God has bestowed on men. Before the priesthood revelation, Black men could not be fully-fledged church members, since men must hold the priesthood in order to perform ordinances and act as leaders within the LDS Church. Until 1978, Black men could only join the faith, receive patriarchal blessings, and enter the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. This policy was ended in June 8, 1978, when LDS President Spencer Kimball received his Priesthood Revelation. On the Priesthood Revelation, see, D. Dmitri Hurlbut “The LDS Church and Problem of Race: Mormonism in Nigeria, 1946-1978,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 3. On the Priesthood Revelation, see Edward L. Kimball, “Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood,” *BYU Studies* 47, no. 2 (2008): 5–78.

Presidency. Would it be possible for you and Sister Mabey to meet in my office this afternoon at three-thirty?"² "Why certainly," Mabey replied.³ "Be happy to. Hope I haven't been a bad boy."⁴ "No," replied Faust. "You've been a *good* boy. See you at three-thirty."⁵

Once they had arrived at the meeting, Rendell and Rachel Mabey learned that Faust had invited them to his office "for the purpose of discussing a vital and challenging assignment, one very dear to the heart of our prophet"—to serve as the first official LDS missionaries in Nigeria.⁶ After some discussion about the unofficial Mormon congregations in the region and the hardships that missionaries would be expected to endure in Nigeria, Faust emphasized: "We are not asking you for a definite commitment right now. We merely want you to go home and discuss the matter—ponder it—and above all talk to your Father in Heaven. Then let us know your feelings about going to West Africa and presenting the gospel formally for the very first time to members of the black race there."⁷ After looking at his wife, Rachel, for a moment, Mabey responded: "If the call should come, we will accept. We will gladly serve wherever we are sent for a long as is necessary."⁸

Since 1946, Nigerians had been asking LDS church leaders to send missionaries, and, church leaders were now ready to answer the call following the 1978 Priesthood Revelation.⁹ But while church leaders had actively avoided proselytizing among "Africans of the black race" due to problems that the "negro question" posed from both a theological and pastoral perspective, Nigerians spent thirty two years organizing unofficial Mormon churches throughout the southeastern part of the country despite absence of robust official engagement.¹⁰ This article examines the challenges that a movement of unofficial Nigerian Latter-day Saints posed for the LDS Church's mission strategy, and how that strategy impacted the lives of Nigerian adherents after the Mabeys along with another missionary couple, Edwin and Janath Cannon, officially opened the LDS Nigeria Mission in November 1978.¹¹ It argues that the unofficial Mormon congregations that emerged in Nigeria between the 1950s and late 1970s forced church leaders to adopt a novel approach to mission that involved shifting their focus from proselytization to supervision. Rather than send nineteen-

² Rendell N. Mabey and Gordon I. Allred, *Brother to Brother: The Story of the Latter-day Saint Missionaries Who Took the Gospel to Black Africa* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1984), 8.

³ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 9.

⁴ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 9.

⁵ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 9.

⁶ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 12.

⁷ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 12.

⁸ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 12.

⁹ For the 1946 letter from O.J. Umondak, an Ibibio man who lived in a village outside Uyo in the Eastern region of Nigeria, see *Minutes of the Apostles of Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City, UT: Privately Published, 2010), 420, Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter LTPSC).

¹⁰ Hurlbut "The LDS Church and Problem of Race," 1. See also James B. Allen, "Would-Be Saints: West Africa before the 1978 Priesthood Revelation," *Journal of Mormon History* 17 (1991): 207–47; Newell G. Bringhurst, "Mormonism in Black Africa: Changing Attitudes and Practices, 1830–1981," *Sunstone* 6 (1981), 15–21; E. Dale LeBaron, "Mormonism in Black Africa," in David J. Davies, ed., *Mormon Identities in Transition* (London, UK: Cassell, 1996), 80–86; Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2005), 81–94; Russell W. Stevenson, *For the Cause of Righteousness: A Global History of Blacks and Mormonism, 1830–2013* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 73–104.

Throughout this essay, I will use the adjectives "Mormon," "Latter-day Saint," and "LDS" interchangeably.

¹¹ This article builds on research previously published in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, which examined the role that a movement of unofficial Nigerian Latter-day Saints played in shaping the LDS Church's thinking about race by laying the groundwork for the 1978 Priesthood Revelation. See Hurlbut "The LDS Church and Problem of Race," 1–16.

year-olds to spread the gospel, between the late 1970s and 1990s, the LDS Church sent a handful of retired couples who possessed extensive church leadership experience to appoint and train Nigerian leaders, teach Nigerian congregants how to be proper Mormons, and organize and integrate local Nigerian congregations into the administrative hierarchy. In doing so, missionaries not only transformed how Nigerians worshipped and went about their daily lives, but also exposed the shortcomings of training programs for missionaries sent on this new kind of mission.

This article bases its conclusions on documentary records and oral histories archived at the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah and L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah.

CALLING MISSIONARIES FOR THE NIGERIA MISSION

The LDS Nigeria Mission was not destined to be a proselytizing mission staffed by nineteen-year-olds. Since the LDS Church already had dozens of unofficial congregations in the region, church leaders did not need to send missionaries to engage in door-to-door proselytizing, which has traditionally been the bailiwick of young missionaries in the LDS Church.¹² Instead, the church needed missionaries who could assume a leadership role that involved organizing Nigerian adherents into branches and directing them how to be proper Mormons.¹³ The ultimate goal of LDS missionary work in Nigeria was to develop local leaders who could sustain the organization with minimal assistance from Salt Lake City, and nineteen-year-olds lacked the requisite experience and skills to do this type of work. For this reason, the church turned to retired and senior Latter-day Saints, such as Edwin Cannon and Rendell Mabey, to fill the ranks of the Nigeria Mission. Prior to serving as a missionary in Nigeria, Edwin Cannon had served as a counselor in the International Mission, a counselor in the bishopric of the South Twentieth Ward, the bishop of the Ensign Fourth Ward, and the president of the Switzerland Mission from 1971 to 1974.¹⁴ Mabey also had an illustrious history of church service. Before he went to Nigeria, he had served as the bishop of the Bountiful Seventeenth Ward, as president of the Bountiful East Stake twice, a regional representative of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and president of the Switzerland Mission from 1965 to 1968.¹⁵

Many of the missionaries that came after Mabey and Cannon had similar experience as leaders within the LDS Church. By the time that LaMar Williams arrived as a missionary in the Efik-speaking region of southeastern Nigeria in the early 1980s, for instance, he had served as the president of the Riverside Stake in Salt Lake City.¹⁶ In the early 1962, LDS Church President David O. McKay called Williams to serve as the Presiding Elder of Nigeria.¹⁷ Williams also served as bishop of the Eighteenth Ward in Salt Lake City from 1970 until 1974 when he was called to preside over the Louisiana Shreveport Mission, which he did until 1977.¹⁸ Many Latter-day Saints also brought extensive professional leadership

¹² See, for instance, Andrea Bennett and Kim Fu, "Putting Eternal Salvation in the Hands of 19-Year-Old Missionaries," *The Atlantic*, 20 August 2014. See also, LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 81, Church History Library, LDS Church, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter CHL): "the people are already there. . . . It isn't the same situation in most missions."

¹³ OH 692, LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 81, CHL: "It's a supervisory type thing. You almost need ex-stake presidents, ex-bishops, ex-mission presidents, and so on, because of the nature of supervising these branches that are established."

¹⁴ OH 618, Edwin Q. [and Janath] Cannon Interview: Salt Lake City, Utah, 1980, Preface, CHL.

¹⁵ "Obituary: Rendell Noel Mabey," *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City, UT), 10 November 2000.

¹⁶ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, Preface, CHL.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, Preface, CHL.

experience to their missionary service. Reed Clegg, for instance, who served as a missionary with his wife Naomi in southeastern Nigeria between April and August 1980, spent three decades working as an administrator for hospitals around the United States, before ending his career as the director of the U.S. Veterans Administration Medical Center in Salt Lake City.¹⁹ He ultimately retired from federal government service in order to accept the call to serve a mission in West Africa.

Nineteen-year-old missionaries did not just lack the leadership experience necessary to develop the Nigerian church into a self-sustaining religious organization, church leaders also feared that young men lacked the maturity to conduct themselves properly in the “primitive” environment of southeastern Nigeria.²⁰ “The situation of young children running around without clothing on and so forth,” recalled LaMar Williams in his oral history, “[i]t’s a dangerous situation, where it takes a lot of wisdom. ... And young boys don’t always act wisely, even though there’s two of them.”²¹ Reed and Naomi Clegg echoed Williams’ sentiment when they suggested that church leaders wanted “mature couples” on account of “the newness and difference in culture.”²² Just as colonial administrators in Nigeria had dismissed anthropologist Northcoate Thomas from his role because they felt he brought a “certain amount of discredit upon the white man’s prestige” for having sex with local women, church leaders did not want missionaries to tarnish the church’s reputation with similar “immoral” acts.²³

There was also a political calculus behind the decision of church leaders to send mature missionary couples to Nigeria instead of nineteen-year-olds. The postcolonial Nigerian government provided all churches with quotas for missionaries, and, according to the Cleggs, “the governments of Ghana and Nigeria consider a couple the same as a single person.”²⁴ Even if the church did not have doubts about the ability of young men to act morally in Nigeria, it would not have made sense from a practical standpoint to send young men to missionize, because it would have reduced “the manpower available by half” for what was already a very lean mission.²⁵

When church leaders weighed all these factors against each other—the existence of unofficial Mormon congregations, the lack of experience and immaturity of young men, and quota considerations—it simply did not make practical sense to send young missionaries to serve in southeastern Nigeria.

TRAINING MISSIONARIES FOR THE NIGERIA MISSION

Since the LDS Church had not established a supervisory mission before, let alone one in southeastern Nigeria, it failed to effectively prepare its missionaries for service between the late 1970s and the early 1990s. Take clothing, for instance. When Cannon and Mabey arrived

¹⁹ OH 622, Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview: Salt Lake City, 1981, Preface, CHL.

²⁰ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 81, CHL.

²¹ Ibid. When Williams was sent on an exploratory fact-finding mission to Nigeria in October 1961, he was accompanied by a nineteen-year-old missionary, Marvin Reese Jones, who was on his way to serve a mission in South Africa. In his oral history, Williams described Jones as “a young boy nineteen years of age, weight about 140 pounds, 6’3” or 6’4” tall. Marvin had false teeth at that age and contact lenses. He was kind of fragile and was not suited to the rough life of Nigeria exactly, as he had lived a rather protected life. But he was a good companion” (LaMar S. Williams Interview, 6, CHL). One cannot help but wonder whether Williams’ experience in Nigeria with Jones influenced his feelings that nineteen-year-olds were not cut out for mission work in Nigeria.

²² Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 6, CHL.

²³ Helen Lackner, “Colonial Anthropology and Indirect Rule: The Colonial Administration and Anthropology in Eastern Nigeria, 1920-1940,” in *Anthology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. Talal Asad (London, UK: Ithaca Press, 1973), 135.

²⁴ Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 5, CHL.

²⁵ Ibidem.

in Nigeria, they reported that the “mere thought of a suit and tie was torture, and both Ted and I soon divided that slacks and short sleeved white shirts were the only tolerable but still respectable missionary attire.”²⁶ While a perusal of American cinema or media would have led anyone during the late 1970s to conclude that traditional missionary attire was not appropriate for a tropical environment, the fact that Cannon and Mabey made an effort to wear suits before adapting their missionary uniform to meet the demands of the local environment demonstrates how the church promoted cultural conformity, and resisted adapting its culture and customs to foreign contexts in subtle ways. Indeed, it was not until 2015 that the church decided that “elders who are called to serve in missions where suit coats are not normally worn . . . will no longer be required to purchase or wear suit coats.”²⁷

Cannon and Mabey were not the only missionaries who could have benefitted from more guidance and preparation for their mission.²⁸ When Reed and Naomi Clegg showed up at the Missionary Training Center (MTC) in Provo at the end of 1979, they discovered that “there wasn’t much orientation that they could give . . . and the training didn’t have too much concerning Africa. . . . Our instructions were only very brief and very general.”²⁹ Following the completion of their mission, they felt that the church “could do a better job here in orienting new missionary couples,” especially in regards to teaching them about what kinds of food and medicines to pack.³⁰

Shirley Jared “Bud” and Ruth Larson, who served as missionaries in Uyo between 1985 and 1986, expressed similar sentiments about how ill prepared they were for Nigeria. The MTC, recalled Bud, “didn’t know that much about Africa. In fact, most of the advice we got was bad, or wrong.”³¹ “We got a lot of instructions on how to get investigators,” Ruth added, “you know, that were irrelevant in Africa. In the first place, we didn’t go out and hunt investigators in Nigeria. They came to us, and we didn’t ever do any door-to-door proselyting. And so all of that was irrelevant.”³² Furthermore, the folks at the MTC told them to take “cotton garments,” which never dried in the tropical climate and eventually “became moldy.”³³ When the Larsons recorded their oral history in 1990, they reported that the people at the MTC were “still telling people to take them even after all these years.”³⁴

By 1990, LDS missionaries still felt that they were not properly prepared to serve their mission by the MTC. Joseph Griggs, who presided over the Nigeria Aba Mission between 1989 and 1990, and his wife Carol reported in their oral history that they attended “the regular proselyting missionary training” at the MTC.³⁵ Upon their arrival in southeastern Nigeria, however, the Griggses learned that they would not be proselytizing, but rather that they “were supposed to work with leadership.”³⁶

It is not entirely clear from the sources reviewed for this article why the LDS Church did not make an effort to improve its training for missionaries headed to southeastern Nigeria

²⁶ Mabey and Allred, *Brother to Brother*, 23.

²⁷ Missionary Department, Letter to General Authorities; Area Seventies; MTC Presidents; Stake, Mission, and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents, 24 June 2015). This letter can be found on the church’s website.

²⁸ While there is a general LDS mission handbook, it mostly regulates behavior. It does not discuss how to handle different cultures.

²⁹ Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 7, CHL.

³⁰ Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 95, CHL.

³¹ OH 991, Shirley Jared “Bud” and Ruth Larson Interview: 10 May 1990, 2, CHL.

³² Shirley Jared “Bud” and Ruth Larson Interview, 2, CHL. Within the LDS tradition, an “investigator” is a potential adherent who is investigating the LDS Church.

³³ Shirley Jared “Bud” and Ruth Larson Interview, 3, CHL.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ OH 1416, Joseph Jones and Joyce Carol Griggs Interview: 11 November 1995, 4, CHL.

³⁶ Joseph Jones and Joyce Carol Griggs Interview, 4, CHL.

between the late 1970s and early 1990s. However, it seems likely that church leaders did not think it would be a good use of the organization's limited resources to design training programs specific to the needs of Nigeria, because they had twenty-thousand missionaries working worldwide in the 1980s and the majority served in proselytizing missions.

ORGANIZING AND TRAINING NIGERIAN BRANCHES

When Edwin and Janath Cannon and Rendell and Rachel Mabey arrived in southeastern Nigeria in late November 1978, they traveled around the region, located the unofficial Mormon groups that had been corresponding with LaMar Williams and others, and baptized their members. The first official Nigerian baptisms occurred in Aboh Mbaise in Imo State. On 21 November 1978, Cannon, Mabey, and Bruce Ardis Knudsen, a Latter-day Saint working for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Enugu, baptized and confirmed 19 Igbo Latter-day Saints in the "Ekeonumiri River" near "Edebom Junction."³⁷ Following these baptisms, Rendell Mabey ordained Anthony Obinna to the priesthood and set apart him as president of the Aboh Mbaise Branch.³⁸ Mabey and Cannon then called Obinna's brothers, Francis and Raymond, to serve as his first and second counselor respectively.³⁹ On this same day, Cannon called another Obinna, Aloysius, to the priesthood.⁴⁰ On 26 December 1978, Cannon, Mabey, and Knudsen returned to Aboh Mbaise and baptized and confirmed another 13 Nigerians.⁴¹ Following these baptisms, they set apart five adherents as teachers, and four as deacons in the branch.⁴² All of these men returned to Aboh Mbaise again on 16 February 1979, with James E. Faust, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who baptized and confirmed another five Nigerians.⁴³ On 25 February 1979, they came to the branch once again and called two adherents to be teachers, four to the priesthood, and four to the office of elder.⁴⁴

This pattern of branch organization replicated itself everywhere Cannon and Mabey went in southeastern Nigeria, including Ikot Eyo, Idung Imoh, Edem Idim Okpot, Okom, Ikot Anang, and Ikot Isighe in the Cross River Region, and Ogbogu in Rivers State.⁴⁵ On 17 March 1979, for instance, Cannon, Mabey and Ime Eduok, President of the Cross River District, baptized and confirmed 53 Efik-speaking Nigerians at Ikot Imoh in the Cross River

³⁷ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Baptism and Confirmations: 21 November 1978," Box 1, Folder 5, MS 21299, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, 1963–1988, CHL; Mabey, Letter to Asay, 13 February 1979, Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

³⁸ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Priesthood Ordinations," Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Baptism and Confirmations: 21 November 1978," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴¹ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Baptism and Confirmations: 21 November 1978," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers; Mabey, Letter to Asay, 13 February 1979, Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴² "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Priesthood Ordinations," Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴³ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Baptism and Confirmations: 21 November 1978," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴⁴ "Imo State District, Aboh Branch Priesthood Ordinations," Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴⁵ "Cross River State District Branch Organizations, Priesthood Ordinations: 4 March 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Cross River State District Baptisms and Confirmations: 4 March 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Cross River State District Branch Organizations, Priesthood Ordinations: 3 March 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Cross River State District Priesthood Ordinations: 11 Feb. 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Cross River State District Baptisms and Confirmations: 11 Feb. 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Cross River State District Organization and Priesthood Ordinations: 13 January 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; Cross River State District, Idung Imoh Branch, Baptisms, and Confirmations: 13 Jan. 1979," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL; "Rivers State–Ogbogu Groups," Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

region in the Imoh River, which separates Rivers State from Akwa Ibom State today.⁴⁶ Then on the following day, 18 March 1979, they baptized and confirmed another 43.⁴⁷ After Cannon and Mabey baptized and confirmed the congregants at Ikot Imoh, they organized the Nigerians adherents at Ikot Imoh into administrative branches as they had done in Aboh Mbaise and elsewhere.⁴⁸ As the activities of Mabey and Cannon in Aboh Mbaise and Ikot Imoh demonstrate, the LDS Church was officially established throughout southeastern Nigeria by a small number of expatriate missionaries who sought to incorporate whom they perceived to be the leaders of local groups directly into the church hierarchy, and transform unofficial congregations into official branches—an integration that was conditional upon, in theory, embracing LDS beliefs and conforming to the church’s ritual behavior.

By March 1979, four months after they had arrived in Nigeria to officially open the Nigeria Mission, church leadership asked Cannon and Mabey to shift their focus from baptizing to teaching because it did not want the number of Mormon adherents in Nigeria to outpace the church’s ability to effectively train them in LDS beliefs and rituals. On 5 March 1979, Carlos Asay, the President of the International Mission (and later a mid-level general authority), wrote to the Cannons and the Mabeys that “it is our recommendation in which Elder Faust concurs that this is now a time for consolidation, for special teaching and special training. The emphasis should not be on baptizing, but rather on fellowshiping and teaching. Would you please concentrate your efforts in this area.”⁴⁹ While the fact that Cannon and Mabey baptized large groups of Nigerians after receiving this letter indicates that they did not seem to agree with the request of church leaders, teaching and training those adherents whom Cannon and Mabey had baptized remained the focus of expatriate LDS missionaries for the rest of the 1980s. In fact, by August 1980, Bryan Espenschied, President of the West Africa Mission, had made church leaders’ position explicitly clear by placing a moratorium on both individual baptisms and mass baptisms in West Africa with the exception of “qualified children of previously baptized members and potential leaders who have received in-depth teaching.”⁵⁰ There was no reason to baptize more adherents if the church could not provide quality pastoral care.

The oral histories of LDS missionaries from the 1980s showcase the church’s desire to emphasize the tutoring of Nigerian adherents and the training of Nigerian leaders in order to create a self-sustaining organization. William V. Bartholomew and his wife Eleanor served their year-long mission primarily in Uyo between November 1979 and September 1980, where they labored among “the twenty six Church units previously organized in that area.”⁵¹ They spent their days traveling to each of these different churches in the Cross River region in

⁴⁶ Mabey, Letter to Asay, 22 March 1979, Box 1, Folder 4, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ “Cross River State District Branch and Group Organizations, 18 March 1979 at Ikot Imo,” Box 1, Folder 5, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL.

⁴⁹ Asay, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Mabey and Mr. and Mrs. Cannon, 5 March 1979, Box 1, Folder 2, Edwin Q. Cannon Papers, CHL. Within the LDS tradition, “fellowshipping” is the act of “offering friendly companionship, serving, uplifting, and strengthening others.” See “Fellowship,” in the LDS Church, “The Guide to Scriptures,” which can be found on the church’s website.

⁵⁰ “Africa West Mission, Mission Zone Conference, August 1, 1980, Enugu, Nigeria,” 2, Folder 4, MS 7516, William V. Bartholomew Papers, 1975-1981, CHL. See also LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 77, CHL; Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 40, CHL: “When President Espenschied arrived in the mission and made his tour, the authorities authorized him to virtually freeze all baptism, because there had been a large number and the members needed training”; Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 50, CHL: “[there was] a virtual freeze on baptisms, but not total.”

⁵¹ “Report of Mission to Nigeria/Ghana from Brother and Sister Bartholomew (William V. and Eleanor M.),” Folder 4, William V. Bartholomew Papers, CHL.

order “to teach and encourage the Church members,” which primarily involved “gospel teaching sessions or leadership type meetings” that were meant to acquaint Nigerians with the church—its doctrines and programs.⁵²

Upon their arrival in southeastern Nigeria, Bryan Espenshied, recalled LaMar Williams in his oral history, instructed Williams and his wife, Nyal, who served a mission in the Cross River region between early 1980 and late 1981, that they were “not to perform any baptisms.”⁵³ Instead, they were “just to teach and kind of strengthen the base of missionary work—that is, the branches we had.”⁵⁴ “[O]ur call from President Kimball,” Williams continued, “was to teach the members and strengthen the members and to teach the gospel to those who were interested.”⁵⁵ Each day, Williams would typically travel to three different Nigerian branches, and teach one of four gospel lessons—“the Godhead lesson, the apostasy lesson and restoration lesson, the Book of Mormon lesson, and the plan of salvation lesson.”⁵⁶

Reed and Naomi Clegg, who served a mission in southeastern Nigeria between April and August 1980, also reported that the “only clear instruction” they had received from church leaders before leaving for West Africa was not to proselytize.⁵⁷ Instead, according to Naomi, they were “to teach leaders.”⁵⁸ Calvin Crane, who worked as missionary in Nigeria between 1983 and 1984, reported that the Richard and Idonna Cantreel, who served in Eket between 1983 and 1984, focused on “training the leadership of the branches,” just as he and his wife were in Aba and later Calabar.⁵⁹ Bud and Ruth Larson, who served a mission in southeastern Nigeria between 1985 and 1986, similarly indicated that they had been instructed “not to start any new branches, and to stick pretty much within the areas that had already been established, and try to teach within those areas instead of spreading to new areas.”⁶⁰ The church wanted its missionaries to concentrate on building a strong base rather than baptizing the masses, a strategy that was wholly unique to Nigeria as virtually all other LDS missions focused on baptizing.

But what exactly were the implications of this training and instruction for Nigerian congregations from a ritual and even theological standpoint? Oral histories that E. Dale LeBaron, president of the South African Mission during the 1978 Priesthood Revelation and later a professor at Brigham Young University, conducted with Nigerian adherents provide some insight into this question.⁶¹ First, many unofficial Nigerian Mormon congregations claimed to have abandoned practices, such as drumming, dancing, and clapping, after they

⁵² “Report of Mission to Nigeria/Ghana from Brother and Sister Bartholomew (William V. and Eleanor M.),” Folder 4, William V. Bartholomew Papers, CHL. See also Espenshied, Letter to Ingrame, 12 September 1980, Folder 4, William V. Bartholomew Papers, CHL: “[The Bartholomews] have done a great service in teaching and training local leaders[.] . . . Much of their time has been devoted to re-teaching, strengthening and upgrading the earlier baptized members so that their baptismal covenants can be totally effectual in their lives.”

⁵³ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 76, CHL.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 76-77, CHL.

⁵⁶ LaMar S. [and Nyal B.] Williams Interview, 86 CHL.

⁵⁷ Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 10, CHL. See also Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 48, CHL: “No active proselyting all through, from the time we left [Salt Lake]. Even before he [President Esenschied] came were not to proselyte.”

⁵⁸ Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 10, CHL. See also Reed L. [and Naomi] Clegg Interview, 10-11, CHL: “When we came along the great need, as Naomi said, was to train leaders. And that was essentially our assignment.”

⁵⁹ Calvin C. Crane, *One Year in Africa* (Blackfoot, ID: Crane Publications, 1991), 38, CHL.

⁶⁰ Shirley Jared “Bud” and Ruth Larson Interview, 15, CHL.

⁶¹ For more details about the African Oral History Project, see D. Dmitri Hurlbut, “LDS Materials for the Study of Postcolonial Africa,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 52, no. 2 (2019): 306-308.

became officially integrated into the church. Akpan Frank Ekpo, branch president in the village of Ikot Annang reported that his congregation “used to beat drums and do dancing” before the missionaries arrived.⁶² Susanna Ekpo, an LDS adherent from Okom, also recalled that whenever she entered the church before the official establishment of the LDS Church, the congregation “praised God, we’d get around, grab hands, and shout. Everybody would say ‘Hallelujah, praise God.’”⁶³ But “[w]hen the missionaries came,” Ekpo continued, “we didn’t do that again.”⁶⁴ Akpan Williams, an adherent from Ikot Ekong similarly told E. Dale LeBaron that, in his previous church, they “used to play drums, dance.”⁶⁵ “Since the whites came into the Church,” Williams stated, “all those things have been abolished.”⁶⁶ Malachi Daniel Essien, the branch president in Okom also observed that before the missionaries came, “we were beating drums on Sunday.”⁶⁷ “When the missionaries came,” however, “they told us that in the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ there is no beating drums in the church on Sundays. . . . They led us and we changed.”⁶⁸ Marvin Reese Jones, who went to southeastern Nigeria in 1961 as part of an LDS fact-finding mission, reported that Matthew Udo-Ete, general superintendent of one of the first unofficial congregations, “had drums in the churches but removed them when they knew it was wrong.”⁶⁹

The decision to become Mormon also affected how Nigerians took the sacrament, a term in Mormonism denoting the Lord’s Supper exclusively.⁷⁰ Because Mormons abstain from alcohol, red wine does not play a role in the ritual of the sacrament.⁷¹ Prior to the arrival of the missionaries, Malachi Essien recalled that “How we conducted the sacrament before is not the way we conduct the sacrament now. . . . we were using wine. We used sometimes biscuits and not bread.”⁷² Akpan Ekpo, the branch president of Ikot Annang, also reported that before the missionaries came to southeastern Nigeria, “what I see the great difference, how to take the sacrament.”⁷³ Sadly, Ekpo did not elaborate on his observation. It is reasonable to wonder whether these observations about Mormon religious ceremonies are accurate, or rather merely being asserted by Nigerian adherents in the presence of E. Dale LeBaron, an official representative from Salt Lake City. However, during a visit that I made to Uyo in 2016, non-

⁶² “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Frank Ekpo, Ikot Annang, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 12-13, Box 9, Folder 21, MSS 1937, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶³ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Susanna Ceril Ekpo, Okom, Ekert [sic] Area, Nigeria, June 2, 1988,” 7, Box 9, Folder 23, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁴ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Susanna Ceril Ekpo, Okom, Ekert [sic] Area, Nigeria, June 2, 1988,” 7, Box 9, Folder 23, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁵ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Evans, Ikot Ekong, Nigeria, May 31, 1988,” 3, Box 9, Folder 31, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁶ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Evans, Ikot Ekong, Nigeria, May 31, 1988,” 3, Box 9, Folder 31, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁷ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988,” 10, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁸ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988,” 10, 11, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁶⁹ 21 October 1961, Journal, MS 1, Marvin Reese Jones Papers, CHL.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Frank Ekpo, Ikot Annang, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 16, Box 9, Folder 21, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁷¹ Joseph Lynn Lyon, “Alcoholic Beverages and Alcoholism,” in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1992), 30-31. The scriptural justification for this practice is *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2013), 89:5.

⁷² “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988,” 11, 12, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁷³ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Frank Ekpo, Ikot Annang, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 15, Box 9, Folder 21, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

Mormon Nigerians frequently commented on the performative austerity of LDS services. These contemporary anecdotes suggest that there may be truth in the statements of the Nigerians. If Nigerian Latter-day Saints had not abandoned these practices by 1988, when LeBaron had interviewed them, Mormon ceremonies likely would not have become more austere over the course of the past thirty years.

At the same time, however, Essien's oral history suggests that Nigerians did not fully implement the LDS version of the sacrament. While the congregants in the First Aba Ward gave up red wine, they did not appear to have systematically adopted the use of bread in the ritual of the sacrament because its cost was prohibitive. "They knew that they should use bread," Essien stated in his interview with LeBaron, "but they felt that it is expensive to use two nira [sic] to buy bread for one time of sacrament meetings."⁷⁴ The use of bread was not the only aspect of the LDS sacrament that Nigerians had a difficult time implementing. Within Mormonism, children can also partake of the sacrament because Mormons believe that children are without sin.⁷⁵ However, Essien noted that congregants had a hard time changing their attitude regarding the participation of children in the Lord's Supper. When the morning service would finish, Essien told LeBaron, "the children and those who didn't want to receive the sacrament would go out, and all those who would like to receive the sacrament would remain in the house . . . That is one of the challenges that we had to work with, because we thought that little children should not partake of the sacrament being that they were too small and too young and not know that God did not forgive little children for taking the sacrament."⁷⁶ Whether other LDS congregations in southeastern Nigeria struggled to purchase bread and incorporate children into the ritual of the sacrament, however, cannot be determined from these sources. Nonetheless, these brief snapshots suggest that despite the church's efforts to facilitate conformity with LDS ritual norms, instances of cultural continuity are lurking beneath the surface of the documentary record that could likely be revealed more clearly through extended ethnographic observation.

Apart from these material differences in the ritual of the sacrament, the interviews in the E. Dale LeBaron African Oral History Collection do not indicate how Nigerian adherents felt about the theological differences associated with the Mormon sacrament. Many LDS adherents came from the Catholic tradition in Nigeria and the doctrine of the Eucharist within Catholicism is well known. When Catholics celebrate the Eucharist, the wine and bread become the body and blood of Christ while maintaining the appearance of wine and sacramental bread, a process known as transubstantiation.⁷⁷ Ex-Anglicans make up the second largest group of Nigerian LDS adherents, according to a rudimentary analysis of the oral histories in E. Dale LeBaron's African oral history project. The Anglicans affirm that when they receive the Holy Communion, they are receiving the body and blood of Christ, albeit in a spiritual manner.⁷⁸ Mormons, however, reject these dogmas. They believe that the bread and water are simply reminders of Christ's suffering and sacrifice.⁷⁹ It is certainly possible that Nigerians were not aware of these nuanced theological differences, or that this was not a non-negotiable issue for adherents.

⁷⁴ "Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988," 12, 13, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC, quote from p. 13.

⁷⁵ Paul P. Pixton, "Sacrament," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1244; Calvin P. Rudd, "Children: Salvation of Children," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 268-269.

⁷⁶ "Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988," 14-15, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁷⁷ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), Section Two, Chapter One, Article Three.

⁷⁸ See Article 28 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

⁷⁹ See *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 20: 75-79.

Other minor ritual changes were noted by Nigerian adherents. Tithing, for instance, which is practiced among Mormons, rendered the collection plate obsolete in the religious services of adherents.⁸⁰ Unlike mainline churches, the Latter-day Saints practiced baptism by immersion, which was common among many of the indigenous churches.⁸¹ As Donatus Okwere, the Okom District President, stated: “In the Catholic Church I was just called to the altar and the reverend father sprinkled me with water on the head and said I am holy that my sins were washed away. But this one I was taken to the water where I was immersed completely, which is the significance of washing my sins away.”⁸² Another minor change surrounded clothing. Within the Mormon tradition, bishops, the LDS equivalent of priests or ministers, do not wear any clerical clothing. This practice differentiated the LDS Church from the majority of the churches in southeastern Nigeria. As Charles Ogbonnaya, the bishop of Aba first ward, recalled after he was called to serve as a bishop: “I looked at other churches, how their bishops dress, and I was thinking whether I am going to dress like that, in a big garment and a very long cap, but the other man[, an LDS missionary,] said, “No. What we do in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that you only need to dress simply, and not do more than that.”⁸³ Thus, the adoption of Mormonism affected how Nigerians practiced their religion in a variety of ways.

The consumption of alcohol, coffee, and tea, as well as the use of tobacco was (and remains) prohibited among church members by the Word of Wisdom.⁸⁴ In E. Dale LeBaron’s African oral histories, dozens of Nigerians who joined the LDS Church reported that they gave up drinking, smoking, and coffee.⁸⁵ Nigerian Latter-day Saints recalled that giving up

⁸⁰ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Udoh Jackson Akpan, Ikot Ekong, Nigeria, May 31, 1988,” 14-15, Box 9, Folder 5, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Akpan Frank Ekpo, Ikot Annang, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 12-13, 16, Box 9, Folder 21, African Oral History Project, LTPSC. “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Nkoyo Francis Okom, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, June 2, 1988,” 17-18, Box 11, Folder 14, African Oral History Project, LTPSC. On tithing in Mormonism, see Robert F. Bohn, “A Modern Look at Tithable Income,” *Sunstone* 9, no. 1 (1984): 17-24; Howard Swainston, “Tithing,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1480-1482. For an example of an indigenous Nigerian church practicing tithing, see Edet, Letter to the First Presidency, 12 December 1962, Folder 65, Percy Farrow Papers, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri (hereafter CCLA).

⁸¹ For examples of indigenous churches practicing baptism by immersion, see, for instance, Edet, Letter to the First Presidency, 12 December 1962, Folder 65, Percy Farrow Papers, CCLA; Friday Michael Mbon, “Brotherhood of the Cross and Star: Sociological Case Study of New Religious Movements in Contemporary Nigeria” (Ph.D. diss., University of Ottawa, 1986), 257-259. On Baptism in Mormonism, see Carl S. Hawkins, “Baptism,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 92-94.

⁸² “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Donatus Wilson Okwere, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988,” 16, Box 11, Folder 18, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸³ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Charles Isaac Ogbonnaya, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 3, Box 11, Folder 12, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸⁴ See *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 89. See also Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1969), 55-57; Joseph Lynn Lyon, “Alcoholic Beverages and Alcoholism,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 30-31; Joseph Lynn Lyon, “Coffee,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 289; Joseph Lynn Lyon, “Tobacco,” in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1482; “Minutes of the General Conference,” *Millennial Star*, 1 February 1852, 35; “The Word of Wisdom,” *Times and Seasons*, 1 June 1842, 800;

⁸⁵ See also “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and William Edeh, Enugu, Anambra State, Nigeria, June 7, 1988,” 6, 12, Box 9, Folder 12, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Ekaete David Eka, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Nigeria, June 5, 1988,” 4, Box 9, Folder 17, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Samuel Eka, Etinan, Nigeria, June 1, 1988,” 2, 12, Box 9, Folder 18, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Godfrey Ezechukwu, Soca Motors, Enugu, Anambra State, Nigeria, June 7, 1988,” 6, Box 9, Folder 32, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Lazarus O. Ikpegbu, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 3, 1988,” 11, 23, Box 10, Folder 9, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Lazarus K. Iroham, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June

their drinking and smoking habits allowed them to save money and get healthy. Rosemary Elendu, a member from Port Harcourt, for instance, stated that before she became a Mormon she “used to drink any type of alcoholic drink. By that time I was getting so fat . . . [b]ut with this church when I gave up these things, I started seeing new life in me. I started [to] be healthy.”⁸⁶ Emeter Eddy, an adherent from Onitsha, reported that his drinking and smoking habits used to take “much money” and “retard[ed]” his life.⁸⁷ “It is a good thing,” he mused, “for one to stop those things.”⁸⁸

The decision to abstain from these activities was not without economic or social impact for some. Solomon Nwokoro, an adherent from Port Harcourt who worked as a representative for the West African Brewing Company, for instance, told Dale LeBaron that he “lost thousands of nira [sic]” after he became a Latter-Day Saint.⁸⁹ “I used to order in the area of 1000 cartons of beer every month, which gave me about 1000 nira [sic] every month,” Nwokoro recalled.⁹⁰ “I had a restaurant beer garden where I could make 2000 nira [sic] monthly. But I have had to close up the street. It was very painful.”⁹¹ The economic impact that Nwokoro’s decision to adopt Mormonism had on his life suggests that the socio-structural argument for religious change cannot be the only explanation for the expansion of the LDS Church in southeastern Nigeria.

Some Nigerian adherents indicated that they lost opportunities to socialize with their peers.⁹² Multiple Latter-day Saints adherents reported that alcohol and tobacco performed a social function in southeastern Nigeria. Samuel Eka, for instance, reported in his oral history that before he became a Mormon he would “go to the bush and sit down and drink some [ball]

3, 1988,” 17, Box 10, Folder 12, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Kalu Iche Kalu, Sr., Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 15, Box 10, Folder 18, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Mbong Afaha Mbong, Etinan, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 22, 31, Box 10, Folder 23, African Oral History Project, LTPSC. “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Clemet Chima Nwafor, Okpuala, Outside Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 14-15, Box 10, Folder 24, African Oral History Project; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Gladys Nwafor, Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 2, Box 10, Folder 25, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Felix O. Nwaubani, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 21, Box 10, Folder 26, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Charles Isaac Ogbonnaya, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 15, Box 11, Folder 12, African Oral Historical Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Donatus Wilson Okwere, Okom, Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988,” 17, Box 11, Folder 18, African Oral History Project, LTPSC. “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Lazarus Onitshi, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 4, 13-14, 20, Box 11, Folder 21, African Oral History Project LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Reuben Okechukwu Onuoha en Route to Aba from Okpuala, Imo State, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 28, Box 11, Folder 24, African Oral History Project, LTPSC; “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Aloysius Stephen Otuwak, Ikwe, Ekert [sic] Area, Nigeria, June 2, 1988,” 30, Box 11, Folder 25, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸⁶ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Rosemary Ykachi Elendu, Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 13-14, Box 9, Folder 24, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸⁷ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Emeter Eddy, Nsukka, Anambra State, Nigeria, June 6, 1988,” 5, Box 9, Folder 11, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸⁸ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Emeter Eddy, Nsukka, Anambra State, Nigeria, June 6, 1988,” 5, Box 9, Folder 11, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁸⁹ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Solomon Ikem Nwokoro, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 10, Box 10, Folder 29, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁰ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Solomon Ikem Nwokoro, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 10, Box 10, Folder 29, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹¹ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Solomon Ikem Nwokoro, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 9, 1988,” 10, Box 10, Folder 29, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹² See Jason Bruner, *Living Salvation in the East African Revival in Uganda* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2017), 69.

and chat with my friends. That kind of thing.”⁹³ Otobong Eshiett, an adherent from Ikot Etinan, similarly observed that many potential female adherents had trouble with the idea that they would have to give up drinking and smoking because some of them “feel like taking a cigarette is part of health. As the young girls in our area do smoke cigarettes and take all the alcoholic drinks.”⁹⁴ Joseph Idiokessen, an adherent from Ikot Ebo Etinan, reported that when he joined the LDS Church and stopped drinking and smoking many of his friends “began to doubt” that “I am living, because sometimes the place they used to go to smoke they don’t see me.”⁹⁵ The decision to become a Mormon did not just affect where Nigerians went to church, it also had ramifications for their daily lives.

Nigerian Latter-day Saints, however, did not only stop imbibing beer and alcohol and smoking tobacco, they also gave up drinking palm wine and chewing kola nuts. Rosemary Elendu, for instance, stated that before she became a Mormon, she “used to chew kola like the houseman.”⁹⁶ Jonathan Madumere, an adherent from Umuahia who served as a bishop in the newly formed Aba Stake reported that after he became a Mormon he “no longer . . . chew[s] kola.”⁹⁷ Malachi Essien, the branch president in Okom, told Dale LeBaron that when he was a member of the Catholic Church he could frequently be found “drinking palm wine.”⁹⁸ Patrick Igwe, an adherent from Anambra State who lived in northern Nigeria for a time, similarly stated that when he moved back to southern Nigeria he drank “things like palm wine because they told us . . . there is no way you can take it and have problems with it.”⁹⁹ After he joined the church, however, “the truthfulness of the Gospel made me stop those things.”¹⁰⁰

Both kola and palmwine perform important ritual and social functions in the southeast. Most notably, kola nut is used to welcome guests, as kola is “a symbol of will, love and openheartedness.”¹⁰¹ This sentiment is captured in the Igbo proverb: “onye wetere oji, wetere udo,” or “the person who brings the kola, brings peace.” However, kola performs a variety of other functions. Nigerians use kola to seal covenants, invoke a blessing, reach out to the spirits, perform a sacrifice, swear an oath, make a petition, settle a dispute, give a gift, give a warning, and discover the outcome of an impending journey.¹⁰² As Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart* demonstrates, palm wine has comparable cultural significance in

⁹³ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Samuel Eka, Etinan, Nigeria, June 1, 1988,” 12, Box 9, Folder 18, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁴ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Otobong John Eshiett, Etinan, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, May 29, 1988,” 9, Box 9, Folder 25, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁵ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Joseph Fred Idiokessen, Ikot Ebo Etinan, State of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria, May 28, 1988,” 23, Box 10, Folder 3, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁶ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Rosemary Ykachi Elendu, Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 13-14, Box 9, Folder 24, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁷ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Jonathan Madumere, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 5, 1988,” 4, Box 10, Folder 22, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁸ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Malachi Daniel Essien, Okom Eket Local Government Area, Nigeria, May 30, 1988. 10, Box 9, Folder 28, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

⁹⁹ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Patrick Utchey Igwe, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 21-22, Box 10, Folder 6, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

¹⁰⁰ “Interview Between Dale LeBaron and Patrick Utchey Igwe, Mission Headquarters, Aba, Imo State, Nigeria, June 10, 1988,” 21-22, Box 10, Folder 6, African Oral History Project, LTPSC.

¹⁰¹ Bertram I.N. Osuagwu, *The Igbo and Their Traditions*, trans. Frances W. Pritchett (1979), 1. A digital copy of this text can be found on Pritchett’s website, “About the IGBO Language: Materials Compiled by Frances W. Pritchett,” <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00fwp/igbo/secondary/secondarymaterials.html> (accessed July 5, 2023). See also Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, ed. Francis Abiola Irele (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 13.

¹⁰² Osuagwu, *The Igbo and Their Traditions*, 12-14.

southeastern Nigeria.¹⁰³ It is also perceived to be a symbol of traditional values that formed the basis of the legendary Palmwine Drinkers' Club, whose motto is the "Basis of African Unity is Palmwine."¹⁰⁴ These disparate examples all underscore the cultural significance of abstaining from the consumption of both kola and palmwine.

CONCLUSION

Let's now pull the threads of this article together. LDS church leaders had a clear idea about what proper Mormon behavior and beliefs should constitute, and missionaries were working diligently to enforce conformity to this foreign culture in ritual and daily life between the late 1970s and early 1990s—albeit with somewhat mixed success. What can this missionary strategy in southeastern Nigeria tell us about Christianity in postcolonial Africa, particularly Nigeria? Since the fifteenth century, foreign mission churches in Africa have been undergoing a process of inculturation – or “letting go,” to borrow Sociologist Phillip Jenkins' words, but the LDS Church's mission strategy in southeastern Nigeria, however, was at its core the opposite of an strategy of accommodation.¹⁰⁵ Rather, it was a strategy focused on facilitating cultural “rupture” in the lives of adherents.¹⁰⁶

Put another way, the expansion of the LDS Church in southeastern Nigeria mirrors the growth of religious fundamentalism in postcolonial Nigeria, which is most visible in the form of Pentecostalism and radical expressions of Islam. In response to their anxieties and the uncertainty caused by pervasive corruption, rampant mismanagement of public resources, the accumulation of wealth in the hands of big men and their loyal followers, many Nigerians embraced the strict religious adherence offered by Pentecostalism and puritanical Islamic groups to gain a semblance of control over their lives and the crisis that is postcolonial daily life.¹⁰⁷ Nigerians, it seems, thought Mormonism was also particularly well-suited to this postcolonial environment.

¹⁰³ Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 4, 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ Araba Oladokun, “The Palmwine Drinkers' Club,” *The Nigerian Field: The International Field Studies Journal of West Africa* 47, Parts 1-3 (August 1982): 3.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Jenkins, “Letting Go: Understanding Mormon Growth in Africa,” *Journal of Mormon History* 35, no. 2 (2009): 23

¹⁰⁶ On rupture and religious conversion see, Jason Bruner and David Dmitri Hurlbut, *Religious Conversion in Africa* (Basel, Switzerland: MDPI, 2020), 5-13.

The irony here, as I have argued elsewhere, is that part of the appeal of Mormonism to Nigerians was actually the points of continuity that adherents saw between their own cultures and Mormonism in its focus strong tradition, for example, of prophesy, dreaming, and divine healing. Thus points of cultural continuity existed even as the missionaries were attempting to facilitate cultural rupture. See, David Dmitri Hurlbut, “The ‘Conversion’ of Anthony Obinna to Mormonism: Elective Affinities, Socio-Economic Factors, and Religious Change in Postcolonial Southeastern Nigeria,” in Bruner and Hurlbut, *Religious Conversion in Africa*, 85-97.

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, John Olushola Magbadelo, “Pentecostalism in Nigeria: Exploiting or Edifying the Masses?,” *African Sociological Review* 8, no. 2 (2004): 15-29; Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

ОТКРЫТИЕ МИССИИ ЦЕРКВИ «СВЯТЫХ ПОСЛЕДНИХ ДНЕЙ» В ЮГО-ВОСТОЧНОЙ НИГЕРИИ В ПОСТКОЛОНИАЛЬНУЮ ЭПОХУ И ЕЕ ВЛИЯНИЕ

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***Аннотация.** В 1978 г. Церковь Иисуса Христа Святых последних дней (официальное название мормонов) разрешила рукополагать чернокожих прихожан в священнический сан. Вскоре вслед за этим в Нигерии была открыта первая официальная миссия мормонов. В силу того, что неофициальные конгрегации мормонов к этому времени уже существовали на территории страны, руководство церкви приняло решение сделать основной функцией миссии руководство и наставничество, а не прямой прозелитизм, как это обычно бывало с зарубежными миссиями мормонов. На основе документальных данных из архивов церкви автор статьи анализирует историю создания и становления миссии, уделяя при этом особое внимание такому аспекту, как кросскультурное взаимодействие. Автор приходит к выводу, что распространение мормонизма в постколониальной Нигерии является частью более общего процесса, а именно – усиления религиозного фундаментализма в стране в условиях нестабильной социально-политической и экономической обстановки.*

***Ключевые слова:** Церковь Иисуса Христа Святых последних дней, мормонизм, религия, христианство, юго-восточная Нигерия*

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