

Mormon Impressions: Locating Mormon Footprints on the South African Religious Landscape

Booker T. Alston
University of Cape Town

Abstract

Since 1853, when the first three official missionaries arrived at the Cape of Good Hope, Mormons have been treading along the South African religious landscape, leaving in their wake a multitude of paths and trails filled with traceable footprints. These footprints have played a critical role in the formulation of impressions about Mormons throughout this church's history in South Africa. This article's main objective is to present a history of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa which consequently relegates it spatially and structurally to the margins of both Mormon and South African religious studies. To further this marginalization the essay purposefully limits its investigation to exploring the external features of the South African religious landscape, subsequently providing the reader with an introductory, surface history concerned with locating the sources of knowledge about Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa.

On August 4, 1852, Joseph Richards, a Mormon missionary assigned to serve amongst the British colonists in India, wrote his older brother Samuel, the president of the European Mission, to inform him of his safe arrival in Calcutta. Also contained in the letter, which was later printed in the Mormon newspaper *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, is the following reflection on the lengthy layover he spent in the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa: "I stopped at the Cape one month and distributed some pamphlets, and talked with a number of the people, who were glad to hear the truth. It would be a good place for a mission; there is

one third Romans, one-third Mahometans [sic], and the rest all sorts” (Richards 1852: 542). Richards’s observations that the Cape of Good Hope would be a fruitful location to gain converts appears to be the inaugural footprint that has led to one hundred and fifty years of Mormon impressions on the South African religious landscape.

Contextualizing the Mormon experience in South Africa is complex for many reasons. First, as a mission and missionary-based organization the Mormon Church might be compared with the vast assortment of European mission-based religious movements that came to southern Africa in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, unlike these Christian missionaries and organizations, the Mormons were not interested in converting the Godless African or in establishing mission stations where the ‘savage’ could be transformed into the ‘civilized.’ As a direct consequence of Latter-day Saint policies and practices of racial inferiority, the Mormon experience in nineteenth-century South Africa was limited and confined to European controlled cities and colonial settlements along the frontier. However, as epitomized by Joseph Richards’s observations in 1852, this was not necessarily a deterrent for future missionaries as there were plenty of “Romans,” and “Mahometans,” to preach to, as well as “all sorts” of other potential converts to gather.

Second, as a church that until relatively recently held a belief and policy of racial inferiority in a country with a government that until even more recently held somewhat similar views of racial segregation and discrimination one might think that the Mormons could be compared ideologically with the “theology of apartheid” (Chidester 1992: 197-203). Mormon belief in the “Curse of Ham” and the church’s practice of denying individuals of black, African ancestry the priesthood and rites of the temple began explicitly after the death of Joseph Smith when Brigham Young took over as the prophet and president of the organization.¹ In theory, Mormon missionaries were still allowed to baptize interested blacks, however, in practice, as exemplified in the Mormon experience in South Africa, missionaries did not actively seek out black, African converts. This policy and practice was maintained throughout the majority of the twentieth century and was not abolished until 1978. The “theology of apartheid” grew out of colonial and Christian conceptions of a hierarchy of the races and was codified as early as the late 1930s by members of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Using scriptures contained in the *Bible* as justification the theology of Apartheid received governmental support when the National Party took over the leadership of South Africa in 1948 (1992: 197-203). Advocating a policy of “righteous racial separation” the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church and the National Party indoctrinated their adherents into a system of race-based prejudice that, as we shall see, has survived to this day and has at least one self-proclaimed White Nationalist advocating that “all Afrikaaners [sic] and white South Africans in

general convert to the LDS church.”² Interestingly, despite these similarities of racial discrimination between Mormon and Apartheid ideologies, the Mormon Church could claim a membership of less than 7,000 in the entire country by the 1970s (Monson 1971; Jenkins 2009). In 1978, when Mormon leaders reversed their racial policies, the number of convert baptisms soared, relatively speaking, throughout the regions of southern Africa, a trend that creates more confusion in our attempt at contextualization.⁴

A third complexity in contextualizing the Mormon experience in South Africa is that, in a strictly theoretical and comparative sense, many Mormon beliefs fit remarkably well into the worldview of what scholars call African Traditional Religion (ATR), and consequently leave scholars such as Philip Jenkins puzzled as to the relative lack of success the church is having in not only South Africa, but the entire continent as well. A survey of the commonalities between these two worldviews was published in 1994 in the edited volume put out by the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University, Mormonism’s oldest and largest academic institution, *Religion in Africa: Expression and Experience*. Dennis L. Thomson’s “African Religion and Mormon Doctrine: Comparisons and Commonalities” cites three shared beliefs and practices between practitioners of Mormonism and ATR, namely “spirits,” “polygamy” and “ancestors” (1994: 89-99). Thomson’s efforts, while superficial and under researched from an ATR perspective, leave the reader wondering how the Mormon Church firstly, could have ignored the possibility for gaining tens of thousands of converts during the initial race for Africa between the various Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century and secondly, why it is still so relatively unsuccessful in gaining converts, specifically in South Africa.

Because of these complexities in contextualizing the history of the Mormon Church in South Africa I have chosen to present the Mormon experience in this country by tracing and exploring the various “footprints” that have left an impression on its religious landscape. In attempting this study I hope to nudge the realm of both comparative analysis and historic chronicling to the side and instead focus my investigations on the literal survivals as well as the current impressions that involve Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa. It must be noted that from nearly every possible perspective the study of the Mormon experience in South Africa is marginal. South African Mormons currently number around 58,000 which represents a mere 0.4% of the church’s worldwide population and approximately 0.16% of all Christians in the country.³ However, studying the margins of a religion and a religion on the margins can still be a worthwhile and informative task. The history of studying religion and religions from the margins—or liminal spaces or the periphery—is not new and offers students and scholars from a variety of disciplines within the social sciences an alternative perspective from which to view and critique the more central,

core aspects of society (Pina-Cabral 1997; Pine and Pina-Cabral 2008). This marginality is often viewed in opposition to centrality and discussed in terms of hegemonic rule and power relations and at times this essay allows for glimpses of this dichotomy beginning first in nineteenth-century colonial South Africa and eventually concluding with the nation's current, post-apartheid era. Yet this is not the chief purpose of this essay and as a result much of the historical information is presented, as Clifford Geertz would say, thinly (Geertz 1973; Clark 2011). According to a recent investigation of Geertz's theoretical framework, "thin description" is defined not just in contrast to its thicker opposite but for its incapacity to account for action (Clark 2011). Working from this explanation it is necessary to label my own study not as "thin" but as a thin "thick description" where contextualization is provided mainly for the purpose of understanding and not as a means of deep analysis.

For the purposes of this particular study I believe the two, marginalization and thin "thick description," complement each other and allow for a surface examination of the history of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa to be depicted. In order to accomplish this task I have utilized the conceit of tracking and locating footprints and impressions and divided this paper into three sections: first impressions, second impressions, and lasting impressions. Section one will focus on the writings produced in South Africa either by Mormons or about Mormons during the nineteenth century that have left traceable historical footprints. The second section will shift from these written footprints to physical ones that have left tangible impressions on the landscape such as the building of chapels, temples, and the introduction of baseball in Cape Town. The concluding section will trace the footprints that are currently making impressions in South Africa today. These footprints have been found in some of the most unlikely locations such as a tombstone in Oakley, Idaho, a white supremacist website, and the gory murder of a Mormon caretaker in Paarl, South Africa. The end result of such a study is to provide students and scholars of religious studies an eclectic view of a religion on the margins from the margins of that religion.

First Impressions

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church or Mormon Church) called their first wave of missionaries to serve in South Africa during a special conference held at the Old Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah on August 28 and 29, 1852. Less than three weeks later Elders Jesse Haven, Leonard Smith, and William Walker left their families and began an arduous journey by foot, horseback, steamboat, train, and ship before finally arriving at the Cape of Good Hope, after a lengthy delay in England, on April 18, 1853 (Wright n.d. (a): 1-35; Monson 1971: 16-18). With little money or provisions the men, under the command of President

Haven, began immediately to create footprints in this newly set apart mission field. The first traceable footprint is found in an informative article printed in the *Cape Town Frontier Times* on April 26 which describes a meeting held by the three missionaries the previous night at the Town Hall:

The Mormons—three disciples of Joe Smith, who arrived in Cape Town a short time since from America, made application to the secretary of the Municipality for the use of the Town Hall, “As three missionaries from America, who were desirous of giving lectures,” which as usual was immediately complied with. The first lecture took place on Monday night [April 25]: the Hall was crowded, and for a time the proceedings were conducted in an orderly manner, until two or three very extraordinary assertions from the lecturer drew forth denials from various parts of the room upon which such a scene of confusion ensued, that one or two of the commissionaires who were present, endeavored to persuade the lecturers to dissolve the meeting, which they succeeded in doing. (Wright n.d. (a): 62-63)

The piece continues by quoting a letter written by a local authority to the Mormon missionaries informing them that their use of the Town Hall was no longer possible “without the express sanction of the Board of Commissioners” (n.d. (a): 63). The article must have sparked the interest of a few local residents as that night, after switching locations to the Bethel Chapel, or “Sailors’ Home,” Elder Walker recorded that the building “was soon filled. Devils and a mob came also, shouting ‘Old Joe Smith,’ etc., making all sorts of hideous noises” (Walker 1943: 24). According to the journals of Haven and Walker, these early meetings were often interrupted by shouting mobs and broken windows and as a result were not conducive to the Mormon’s missionary efforts.

As an alternative the elders, especially Haven and in one instance Walker, began publishing tracts that could be easily distributed and provided ample descriptions of their church’s doctrine and faith. The first, Haven’s *Some of the Principal Doctrines or Belief of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, was printed by W. Foelscher of Church Street, Cape Town on June 8, 1853. The tract lists thirty three beliefs of the Mormon Church and includes the thirteen Articles of Faith Joseph Smith had provided John Wentworth a decade earlier. Of the thirty three, perhaps the most important for our purposes here contain reference to the condoning of polygyny. Haven writes:

We believed [sic] there has been a law revealed, by which a man in Zion [Utah Territory], and in Zion *only*, or at the place

the Lord has commanded His people to gather, can have more than one wife; and this law is under the strictest regulations.

We believe this law is not given to gratify the lusts of men but given for the exaltation of both men and women,—giving to every woman the privilege of filling up the measure of her creation, and lawfully, and honorably and virtuously obeying the first and great command, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”

The challenge of converting monogamous Christians to the concept of polygamy, even if they were not required personally to practice it, was not an easy task for early Mormon missionaries. Haven, himself a practitioner of “the principle” having at the time two wives (Wright n.d. (a): 17), understood this well and before *Some of the Principals* was even published he had begun working on his second publication, *Celestial [sic] Marriage, and the Plurality of Wives!* (1853),⁵ which he states was a necessity “On the account of the slanderous reports, and scandalous misrepresentations in regard to the doctrine of the PLURALITY OF WIVES, and the CELESTIAL MARRIAGE.”

Though not the accounts Haven is specifically speaking about in his introduction to this tract, examples of such publications in South Africa can be found, many of which focus much of their attention on the Mormon practices of polygyny and immigration. A tract recorded “verbatim” by Haven in a report to his superiors at LDS Church headquarters in Salt Lake City in June, 1854 is imaginatively titled *Female Emigration: Under the especial patronage of his Satanic Majesty and all his Royal Family, For Zion, that remarkable vessel, “Sanctified Licentiousness”* and reads in part:

Persons in the proportion of “seven women to one man” willing to proceed to Zion are requested to feed, clothe, lodge, listen to and believe the agents; when a passage to that fair Haven—the prison in which Smith and his followers are said by their friends, and believed by all to be Walkers—will be certainly secured. (Wright n.d. (a): 70)

According to Haven the author of this account, though anonymous to the readership, was found out “and when accused of it, he was ashamed to his own progeny” (n.d. (a): 69). Haven writes that this particular attempt at disrupting Mormon missionary efforts had “rather overshot the mark” and “did not go down among the people” (n.d. (a): 69). However, other accounts, not so dramatic in nature, drew a fair amount of attention from the public. One such source,

published in 1863 in Dutch, *De Mormonen in Zuid-Afrika* was written by Reverend Johannes Beijer, a Dutch Reformed Church Minister in Colesberg, South Africa and given official sanction by the Elders of the Dutch Reformed Church “pursuant to Article 55 of the Synod of Dordrecht of 1618 and 1619” located in Reddersburg, Orange Free State. According to a 1938 history documenting “American Achievements in Africa,” *Stars and Stripes in Africa*, Reverend Beijer’s work called attention to the emigration of South African Mormon converts and “excited South Africa considerably and there was some demand for the book” however as the author of *Stars and Stripes in Africa* suggests, the excitement for the book and the concern of the emigration and the emigrants “gradually lapsed into obscurity” (Rosenthal 1938: 101-103).

Early footprints about Mormons continued to mark the religious landscape of South Africa during the 1850s and 60s, creating a series of first impressions for the residents of South Africa’s European colonists. Haven would produce two more tracts about his church’s faith both of which would appear before the public in English as well as in Dutch. The first, *On the First Principles of the Gospel*, was printed during the first week of September 1853 and is presented as a letter to Haven’s brother, Reverend John Haven, a pastor in the Congregational Church in Massachusetts. The work is strategic in that it stresses the aspects of Mormonism that coincide with Jesus Christ’s original church organization as expounded in the *New Testament*. Haven obviously felt the work was useful in his proselytizing in the Cape and recruited convert Thomas Whitehead to translate it into the Dutch language for the purposes of reaching a broader range of citizens in the area (Cannon 2007). The second, and last of Haven’s general epistles to the public of South Africa, was a two page document entitled *A Warning to All* (1853), and is another piece meant specifically to dispute the bad press the Mormons were receiving in the country. In this work Haven claims that he and his fellow missionaries, Smith and Walker, “came not to this Colony to wrangle with any one, but simply, plainly, and peaceably, to declare unto the people what we do know, and what we have seen.” “Therefore,” Haven continues, “we have but one word to say about the tracts and pamphlets, that have been printed against us here, and are in circulation amongst the people.—They are filled up with lies and falsehood.”

William Walker’s contribution to the religious landscape in South Africa came not in the Cape of Good Hope but in the Eastern Province city of Port Elizabeth. Walker, under the direction of Haven, made the trek from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape in late November, 1853 (Walker 1943). He labored in this area, from Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage all the way to Queenstown which included local settlements such as Grahamstown, Fort Beaufort, and East London, for the remainder of his time in the country, which concluded in November, 1855 when he and many of his converts set sail on the *Unity*. During Walker’s ministry in the

Eastern Province, he distributed the tracts written by Haven and also wrote his own epistle, *To the Intelligent Public*, which he had printed for distribution; however, it received a much larger readership when it was republished in the *Port Elisabeth Telegraph* a short time later. Walker's words are another response to what these Mormon Elders clearly viewed as misrepresentations of them by other Christian organizations. Directing the reader's attention to "false statements" made by a contributor to the *Port Elisabeth Mercury* on October 20, 1855, Walker writes,

But bishops, clergyman [sic], ministers, teachers, and many professed Christians, choose rather to circulate, falsehoods and make denunciations, such as "Joe Smith," "false prophet," "deceiver," "blasphemer," "Book of Mormon, a fanciful novel," "a romance," and so forth. "Brigham Young has seventy wives!" Shocking! Oh awful Mormon polygamy!! Oh horrible!! (Walker 1943: 54)

Ultimately Walker's main focus in producing this tract was the same as Haven in Cape Town, to combat the bad press the Mormon Church had been receiving throughout the colony.

From these early footprints located in newspapers, missionary journals, and creedal tracts it is evident that the majority of first impressions created about Mormons by South Africans were not positive. During this initial twelve year period, 1853-1865, of official Mormon activity in South Africa an estimated three hundred converts were gained, two hundred and ninety four of which left almost immediately to join their fellow members in Utah.⁶ These figures are low by most nineteenth-century missionary standards, especially Mormon ones where in England a single, exemplary missionary converted more than this total of three hundred in a single year (Hartshorn 1972). Of course it must be noted that a great deal of Mormon proselytizing success came before the polygamy years, a practice that without a doubt was the main, residual Mormon footprint left lingering on the nineteenth-century South African religious landscape. The practice of plural marriage coupled with the emphasis on immigration was clearly the most significant first impression about Mormon and Mormonism formulated by South Africans at this time. Support for such a finding can be found in nearly every footprint discussed in this section and is perfectly exemplified by a letter published in the *Port Elisabeth Herald* on July 27, 1862, and recirculated by the *Natal Mercury* on April 16, 1863, from a disillusioned convert to the Mormon Church who, after relocating to Utah, quickly distanced himself from his new faith. The letter reads in part:

Dear Sir... I have written to Africa so many times that I have almost given up all hopes of hearing form any of you again. I

expect you have heard of my leaving Salt Lake Valley through my letter to John Stock [a Mormon Convert], warning him of the trouble he was about to get into through leaving Algoa Bay with his family to go the Valley of the Salt Lake, where nothing but poverty and tyranny would await him under the despot Brigham [Young] and his council...They are a gang of thieves and murderers. If any of their Elders visit Africa, flog them out of the colony...The tenth part of everything that you grow, breed, or make, must be paid into the tithe office, for the support, I suppose, of their women. How is it possible for any of them to support from ten to forty families without working, who a few years back had nothing to call their own, and who are now riding in their carriages with servants to wait on them? (Wright n.d. (a): 201-202)

Though the Mormon missionaries attempted to combat such publicity their lack of success in the country as well as the continuation of press coverage exemplified above leads one to conclude that the first impressions formulated about Mormons in South Africa were not exactly conducive to attracting potential converts.

Second Impressions

Why Mormon representatives left South Africa in 1865 and did not return until 1903 has been attributed to both a lack of early missionary success in the country as well as a general Mormon “worldwide scaling-down of missionary efforts” during the late 1850s and 1860s (Bringhurst 1981: 17).⁷ The consequences of this total departure resulted in a nearly indistinguishable trail of footprints and only the lasting impressions of a Christian Church that practiced polygamy and demanded the relocation of its converts to a foreign land to be ruled over by a tyrannical leader. With the exception of Cape Town resident George Ruck and eleven other members scattered across the Eastern Province the only physical footprints that remained in South Africa by the turn of the twentieth century were a few of the tracts printed by Haven and Walker (Wright n.d. (b): 7, 33). However, these were not necessarily debilitating circumstances for the new arrivals in 1903. In fact, it gave the four new Utah missionaries a chance to generate their own footprints and create a series of second impressions that in many cases still exist today.

The time period in which these second impressions are being located is essentially the entire twentieth century. As previously mentioned, the Mormon Church officially recommitted itself to establishing a presence in South Africa in 1903 when Elders Warren Lyon, William R. Smith,⁸ George R. Simkins, and

Thomas Lewis Griffiths were called to reopen the mission (Wright n.d. (b): 2). Over the next fifty years converts were slowly but steadily gained with lean years seeing only a handful baptized and peak years, like 1906 and 1931, reaching totals of 88 and 147 respectively (Monson 1971: 144-146). During the first half of the twentieth century one of the main difficulties the Mormon mission in South Africa faced was legislation limiting the number of missionaries that could be sent from overseas in general and at times, because of political alliances, from America specifically (Monson 1971: 49-59). The war years also affected the availability of young, adult males willing and able to serve church over country. However, despite these early setbacks the missionaries maintained a constant presence in South Africa, creating a trail of footprints meandering across the religious landscape of the country. One in particular, the organization of baseball in the Cape, has left an impression worth examining here.

The second half of the twentieth century is when the Mormon Church began to experience an actual physical presence on the landscape. With the exception of a mission home that doubled as a meeting house located in Cape Town and one chapel in Johannesburg, for the first fifty years of the twentieth century the Mormon concept of sacred space in South Africa existed within the testimonies of their missionaries and in the hearts of their converts. However, with an amendment to the law which prohibited a large number of missionaries from being sent to South Africa resulting in influx of converts and the ability to send missionaries to various, less central locations, the roaming sacred became stationary during the 1950s and 60s when the number of church owned buildings soared from two in 1952 to twenty one in 1970. Mormon occupied sacred space became even more centralized in 1985 when eventual prophet Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated a temple, the ultimate sacred space in Mormondom, in the suburb of Parktown, Johannesburg. It is the purpose of this section to trace these footprints of the sacred and present a history of the Mormon Church in South Africa by locating the impressions they have created on the physical and spiritual landscape in this country.

In 1938 Eric Rosenthal, the Cape Town born amateur journalist and historian, completed his work on the connections between America and South Africa. Aptly titled *Stars and Stripes in Africa*, Rosenthal's book carried with it an authority that only a foreword from two-time Prime Minister of South Africa, Jan Christian Smuts could provide. Rosenthal later wrote in his memoirs that his initial idea for the history started because of the steady stream of American, cruise ship tourists who were appearing with some regularity throughout the nation in the 1930s. "Might not some of the stay-at-homes," Rosenthal wondered, as opposed to the "camera-carrying, gum-chewing" visitors, "be interested in a book on the links of the U.S.A. with our Country?" (Rosenthal 1979: 123). Smuts thought so and added that the work "fills a gap among our History books, the

existence of which has been overlooked for a surprisingly long time” (Rosenthal 1938: foreword).

For our purposes here the importance of *Stars and Stripes in Africa* is that it contains a remarkable footprint for trackers of Mormon history simply by the inclusion of a chapter entitled, “Mormons in Africa” (1979: 100-103). Rosenthal’s chapter contains a brief history of the Mormon presence on the continent and even claims, without references, that as early as 1836 Dutch tracts were being circulated condemning the six year old American church. He even goes as far as to claim that sometime in the early 1840s Mormon missionaries reached the shores of the “Black Continent.” Rosenthal continues with a more familiar history and addresses the early exploits of the missionaries in the 1850s and 60s. It is from this source that mention of the Dutch work *De Mormonen in Zuid-Afrika* (1863) is found. Turning to current affairs, Rosenthal writes about the present Mormon mission president, Elder Don Mack Dalton, specifically mentioning “Cumorah,” the official name of the mission home in Mowbray, and concludes his brief chapter with the following footprint: “Both Boer and British are represented in the Church here to-day: at least one local-born missionary is claimed; and the Cumorahs are the Union’s most successful baseball team!” (1979: 103). Rosenthal’s inclusion of the Mormons in his work was a footprint that reached far beyond the shores of South Africa and with its second edition in 1968 continued to create an impression of the Mormon Church as an American entity in South Africa throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.⁹ However, it is the footprints he left behind by mentioning Don Mack Dalton, “Cumorah,” and baseball that lead us down a new trail which leaves the realm of metaphor behind and begins to tread on the physical landscape itself.

Don Mack Dalton came to South Africa as the new Mormon mission president in 1929 and served in that capacity until replaced in 1935. Dalton’s arrival in South Africa was noted almost immediately as he was a friend and former sparring partner of “The Manassa Mauler” and non-practicing Mormon boxing champion, Jack Dempsey (Dalton n.d.). Dalton quickly took advantage of his public appeal and attempted to refute the negative press the Mormons had consistently been subjected to. However, it was not until he gave the journalists something new to write about did the impressions of the Mormons throughout the country change.¹⁰ Interestingly, what Dalton offered the public of South Africa and especially the residents of the Cape Town area was not Joseph Smith’s version of Christianity but America’s favorite pastime: baseball.

In brief, as told in an unpublished article written by Dalton himself “It can be done, It was done,” the beginnings of baseball in Cape Town began in August, 1932 when a group of local business men and members of the Cape Town University Club met in a board room at the Cape Argus to discuss the

possibility of creating a league. A general committee was formed and Dalton was appointed to it and later was named manager of the Cumorah Baseball Club, one of the two original teams organized during this initial formative period, the other was known as the Nomad Athletic Club. Soon Dalton scheduled a meeting at Cumorah, the name ascribed of the Mormon headquarters in South Africa which was located on Main Road, Mowbray, where “several business men, two doctors, a lawyer, an undertaker, some students, a Bible student missionary (later a convert), an atheist, some railway men, some members of the church, and five missionaries were present” (n.d. 11). The name Cumorah was chosen to represent the team which would have been an honor for the Mormons as the term not only signified the headquarters of the Mormon Church in South Africa but was also the name of the hill where Moroni, a *Book of Mormon* prophet and historian, buried the plates of gold edited and compiled by his father, Mormon (McConkie 1958: 162). The team was originally made up of five Mormon missionaries including Dalton, however one of the best players, and team captain, was a non-member and local physician “Doc” Robinson. The first game was arranged for August 31, a Wednesday evening, and was reported the next day in the *Cape Argus* in the “Talk of the Tavern” section: “Baseball was played on Green Point Common last evening. A friendly game had been arranged and two teams named Cumorah—after the Mormon headquarters at Mowbray—and Nomads demonstrated the intricacies and excitements of the American Ball Game.” Dalton’s account mentions several more newspaper articles, giving the impression that the game was growing in popularity.

One such article, written enthusiastically by the sports editor of the *Cape Times*, is recorded by Dalton but reproduced here from the original, was entitled, “WHAT D’YA THINK UV THAT?” (18 October 1932). The article begins with a cry from a “rooter or barracker (or whatever the baseballed [sic] titled is for the loud speaker who says what most spectators are too modest to do more than think),” challenging his fellow sport fans by shouting “The catcher’s asleep an’ the pitcher’s rattled! What more d’ya want?” Throughout the piece the editor of the sport’s section continues his playful analysis of the first baseball game that he had ever seen, enlightening his readership of such baseball colloquialisms as “a li’l walk,” “fair fly,” and “Aw, the guy’s paralysed and cayn’t hit nothing!” In the end the writer concludes that the nearly one thousand fans “could do with another exhibition baseball game or two; and if Saturday’s play can be taken as a criterion, the sport will undoubtedly become popular. It deserves to!” History would prove these last sentiments to be false, however, the sport does still exist in South Africa today with leagues existing in most major metropolitan centers; however, the best players participate in the Western Province Major League with clubs found throughout the suburbs of Cape Town. There is a national team that competes on the international stage and in 2005 the South African born

pitcher, Barry Armitage became the first to represent his country in the Major Leagues when he threw for the Kansas City Royals (Janda 2010).

While baseball has never reached the level of popularity in South Africa that its original organizers must have hoped for, it did create an important impression on the religious landscape for Mormons. As we have seen, the participation of the Cumorah Baseball Club and the association of the team with the Mormon missionaries allowed for members of the church as well as the missionaries themselves to engage in conversations that they would otherwise not have been able to. And while the number of converts did not drastically increase, the years under the leadership of President Dalton saw consistently more baptisms than ever before; numbers that would not be reached again until the early 1950s (Monson 1971: 144-146).¹¹ At a time when the Mormon Church most needed it, baseball formed a second impression of this American religion that was not entrenched in the ever reoccurring impressions of polygamy and extra-Biblical scripture.

During the 1930s the term “Cumorah” became synonymous with Mormons, more so in the Cape but as baseball grew in popularity and spread to Johannesburg and then to Durban and eventually throughout the country it became a nationally recognized symbol for both baseball and Mormonism. As explained above, Cumorah is actually the name of the location of the buried, gold plates of which the *Book of Mormon* is a translation of (McConkie 1958). This sacred space is held as such by all believers in Joseph Smith’s restored version of Christianity and is believed to be physically located near the small town of Palmyra, New York. Today, thousands of Mormons and visitors journey to the hill to witness an elaborate ritual reenactment of the events that led to the creation of this sacred space. In South Africa, another sacred space was set apart by the followers of Joseph Smith which marks the trail head for a series of footprints that literally dot the religious landscape in South Africa and have left an indelible impression for interested observers.

The Mormon Church acquired their first property in South Africa, and all of Africa for that matter, in 1918 when Samuel Martin, a successful Cape Town baker and business owner, paid the obligatory ten percent tithe on his share of the profits generated from the sale of his baking and confectionary business, of which he was a part owner (Wright n.d. (b): 145-149). The sum donated to the church amounted to almost six hundred and fifty pounds, almost one third of the asking price for the future sight of Cumorah. Where the funds came for the remaining two thirds is not exactly known, but it is often speculated that Martin funded the entire purchase before his immigration to Utah. Ground was broke on Main Road, Mowbray in early 1919 and soon the Mormon mission had an operational base which also served as a local meetinghouse for members in the area. The site was renovated and added upon in the late 1930s and completely

destroyed and rebuilt in 1966 but remained the *axis mundi* of Mormondom in South Africa until 1985 when a temple was built in Johannesburg, consequently relocating Mormon sacred space spiritually and physically.

Following the construction of “Cumorah” Mormon leaders in South Africa answered the needs of the growing population of converts in the Johannesburg area and in 1925 “Ramah,” a different name used for the sacred hill Cumorah in Mormon scripture, was dedicated for use as a meetinghouse and multipurpose building for members in the Transvaal (Wright n.d. (b): 134-140). Not until the 1950s were more church buildings constructed and set apart as additional sacred spaces. The first in this era was built in Springs, an industrial city approximately fifty kilometers east of Johannesburg, followed closely by chapels in Port Elizabeth and Durban (Wright n.d. (b), n.d. (c); Monson 1971: 110-116). The flurry of chapel building continued into the 1960s where the end of that decade saw a total of twenty one church owned buildings in the country. Funding for the building campaign was generated by local tithes and offerings, fundraising, and monies sent from a growing surplus in Salt Lake City. Today, the metropolitan city of Cape Town alone, which includes areas as far south as Fish Hoek, north as Paarl, and east as Gordon’s Bay has ten church-owned buildings, which includes the chapel located at “Cumorah.”

The crowning achievement of physical Mormon impressions in South Africa was completed in 1985 and dedicated as a sacred space on August 24 in that same year. Located in Parktown, Johannesburg the temple is both architecturally and spiritually superior to “Cumorah,” “Ramah,” and every other church-owned property in the country. In defining the significance and meaning of the temple to Mormons, the preeminent Brigham Young University scholar, Hugh Nibley (1910-2005), wrote:

The temple is the primal central holy place dedicated to the worship of God and the perfecting of his covenant people. In the temple his faithful may enter into covenants with the Lord and call upon his holy name after the manner that he has ordained and in the pure and pristine manner restored and set apart from the world. (Nibley 1992: 1458)

In order for these locations to become, as Mormon Apostle and theologian, Bruce R. McConkie (1915-1985), once stated, “the most sacred places of worship on earth” a ritual of dedication must occur, in which the building and the site on which it stands are set apart as a holy location where only those who are proven, recommend holders may stand (McConkie 1958: 704).¹² This process of sanctification invokes in the religious studies minded reader the definition of the sacred proposed by Emile Durkheim when he wrote that sacred things are

“set apart and forbidden” (Durkheim 1915: 47) . The Johannesburg Temple’s ritual prayer, offered by future prophet and president of the Mormon Church Gordon B. Hinckley, reads in part:

We dedicate the earth on which it [the temple] stands. We dedicate the grass and flowers, the trees and shrubs of these grounds that they may enhance the beauty of the structure. We dedicate the building from the footings and foundation to the figure of Moroni which crowns its tallest steeple...Wilt Thou [God] sanctify it and make it holy unto all who shall enter. (Hinckley 1985)

This ritual dedication allowed for a centralized and stationary sacred space for Mormons in South Africa and has left a literal impression of this organization on the South African religious landscape.

During the twentieth century a series of footprints were physically produced by Mormons in South Africa in an effort to eliminate the negative, lingering first impressions of their people and organization left over from the previous century. These second impressions were no longer solely formulated by battles raging in the press and other written works but could now be created in tangible terms, by physically observing the landscape. Buildings were erected, temples dedicated, and America’s favorite pastime, baseball, was organized. In religious studies terminology, the sacred space of Mormonism in South Africa was now physically locatable and as a result members of the faith no longer needed to travel outside of the country to receive the fullness of Joseph Smith’s restorations.¹³ When this stability is coupled with the reversal of Mormonism’s policies of racial prejudice in 1978 a plausible explanation for the dramatic influx in membership during the last forty years can be seen. However, an examination of more recent footprints will allow us a glimpse of what the lasting impressions of Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa may actually be.

Lasting Impressions

To locate the Mormon Church on the current South African religious landscape, I have searched the internet, from government sponsored historical websites to a variety of different newspaper articles, and even member-based forums where people cyberly gather and discuss issues important to them. While this may not be the most scientific of methods I believe it is a reasonable approach for the purposes of this particular section where a survey of lasting impressions is needed to complete this historical tracking of Mormon footprints in South Africa. In today’s social network and mass media dominated culture of knowledge

circulation the paths of Mormon footprints have undoubtedly made their way onto the internet where people are free to trace these markings for themselves and in the process create a situation where the interested observer is left to formulate his or her own impressions. This section has followed three of these sets of footprints and begins by tracing the tragic tale of Gobo Fango from South Africa to Oakley, Idaho and, through the process of knowledge circulation, back to South Africa. It will then explore the minds of several white supremacists and will conclude with a look at the gruesome murder that took place in the Mormon church in Paarl.

As far as Mormon footprints involving South Africa are concerned none have left larger or longer lasting impressions than the asymmetrical ones of Gobo Fango. Born near Queenstown in 1855, Gobo's formative years were spent in a constant struggle for survival (Garrett 2001: 52-62).¹⁴ With war raging relentlessly throughout the Eastern Province the depleting Xhosa resistance suffered a further, and ultimately a final, setback when a famine caused an endemic food shortage throughout southern Africa (Chidester, 1992: 51-52). Gobo's mother was one of these starving, desolate Xhosa desperate to save herself and her two children. Roaming the countryside in search of food, she soon became too weak to carry both three year-old Gobo and her newly born baby. Consequently, she made the decision to abandon Gobo in a roadside tree and continue to her search without the cumbersome toddler. It was not long before the young mother stumbled into the farmyard of a Henry Talbot and pleaded with the family for their assistance. Gobo was soon retrieved from his perch but his mother, doubting her ability to care for the child, left the boy with the Talbot family as an indentured servant.

Henry Talbot was eleven years old when his family emigrated from England with the Hezekiah Sephton party in 1820. Upon landing in South Africa the group would eventually establish the colonial settlement of Salem, which was located southwest of Grahamstown on the Assegai Bosch River (Makin 1971). Henry Talbot would eventually leave this area and relocate to a farm allotment in the Queenstown district which is where he was first introduced to the Mormon Church. Talbot was baptized on December 28, 1857, and was soon followed into the waters by the remainder of his family, which consisted of his wife and fourteen children. As was discussed earlier in the paper, it was the general practice of converted Mormons to join the main body of the church in Utah and the Talbot family was no exception. On February 20, 1861 all sixteen members of the Talbot family as well as the eldest son's new bride, Lovina Wall, and Gobo boarded the *Race Horse* and set sail for Boston, Massachusetts. The decision to take Gobo with them has been painted in two different ways. The first, as found in A. E. Makin's *1820 Settlers of Salem* (1971), states that the Talbots "had wanted to leave him [Gobo] behind at Queenstown but could not resist his crying and

pleading to be taken along as well” (1971: 115). However, once aboard, Makin’s account reads, Gobo “caused a lot of amusement to the sailors and the captain gave him the task of feeding the sheep that were aboard to provide fresh meat during the voyage” (1971: 115).

The second account, taken from Talbot family myth and published in 2003 to a worldwide Mormon audience in the church’s official children’s magazine, *Friend*, forwards the notion that Gobo was very much part of the family and would be relocating with the family at all costs. The article reads:

When the ship’s captain refused to allow Gobo on the boat, Henry Talbot knelt and asked for Heavenly Father’s guidance. He knew that Gobo would not be able to take care of himself if left behind. An idea came to Brother Talbot—his prayer was answered! He would roll Gobo into a large rug and smuggle him on and off the ship. Gobo was afraid to be wrapped inside the dark, heavy carpet. However, he had faith in the prophet’s counsel to go to America, so he remained very still and quiet. No one knew of the precious treasure tucked away in the old, faded rug. (Hilmo 2003: 28)

This version of the tale is also mentioned in H. Dean Garrett’s authoritative account “The Controversial Death of Gobo Fango” (1989) and is evidenced by a family letter written in the 1930s (Garrett 2001: 53, 61).

Like the circumstances of his early years in South Africa, the timing of Gobo’s immigration to America was not auspicious, as just five days before the Talbots landed in Boston the first shots of the American Civil War rang out at Fort Sumter (Makin 1971: 115; Garrett 2001: 53). By the time the family and Gobo arrived in Chicago on the train, Henry Talbot was being accused of being a slave owner and the drama apparently grew so tumultuous that Gobo

fled inside the train and one of the ladies of the company hid him beneath her crinolines while the angry emancipationist searched the train without success. To avoid a recurrence of the trouble, Gobo was dressed in girls [sic] clothing and his head was covered with a huge sun bonnet. At awkward times a veil was added to make sure his black face was completely hidden. (Makin 1971: 115-116; Garrett 2001: 53)

Unfortunately for Mormon converts, the railroad connecting the continent was not yet completed and upon arrival in Joseph, Iowa the party of South African immigrants had to finish their long journey by foot and ox-cart. Upon arrival

in the Salt Lake Valley the Talbot family settled as soon as weather permitted in Kaysville, Utah and unfortunately for Gobo this meant he was to resume his life of indentured servitude.

According to family legend, “Gobo was excited to start his new life there [America]. He wanted to meet the prophet and see the temple that the missionaries in Africa had told him about... Once in Utah, Gobo grew into a righteous, hardworking shepherd” (Hilmo 2003). However, a much more likely story, with evidentiary support, is found in the works of Makin and Garrett. Garrett’s account reads, “Gobo was expected to work for the Talbots as a laborer and shepherd, and life was apparently hard for him. He lived in a shed in back [sic] of the Talbots’ house. One cold winter his feet froze, and he lost part of the heel on one foot” (Garrett 2001: 55). “When he [Gobo] came to our place,” wrote an acquaintance of the Talbot families and cited in Garrett’s article, “his feet were badly frozen, and he was a cripple until his death. My first recollection was always seeing him wrapping his feet with cloths, and later I remember he had boots” (2001: 55). Apparently Gobo once showed his disabled foot to the acquaintance’s brother and indeed the heel was gone and in order for Gobo’s boots to fit properly he stuffed them with wool (2001: 55).

To make the case even stronger against the claim that Gobo was considered part of Henry Talbot’s family, the Xhosa was either sold or given away in his early teens to the Lewis Whitesides family (2001: 55). Gobo was soon appropriated by a married daughter of Lewis Whitesides and relocated to Grantsville, Utah to tend the sheep of Mormon Bishop Edward Hunter and his wife Ruth Whitesides Hunter. This would be Gobo’s final relocation as a servant, as directly upon Hunter’s acquisition of the boy he was placed on the payroll and treated as an employee. Gobo’s freedom probably has more to do with the fact that President Lincoln had passed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and by 1865, the approximate date of the Hunter procurement, all “involuntary servitude was abolished throughout the United States” (2001: 55-56). However, evidence does suggest that the Hunter family treated Gobo well, as Gobo would eventually choose for himself to partner with two of the Hunter boys in his own sheep operation and upon his death he willed a portion of his estate to the Hunter family (2001: 57). According to Makin it was at some point during this time of adolescence that he “adopted a surname and was known as Gobo Fango” (Makin 1971: 117). Gobo’s choice in surname as well as the obvious omission of the Talbot family from his will further suggests that he had no real allegiance to the Talbots.

The life of Gobo came to a tragic conclusion on February 10, 1886 after a four or five day struggle to survive multiple bullet wounds inflicted by Frank Bedke, an Idaho cattleman who felt Gobo was grazing his flock of sheep too close to his land. According to Garrett’s research, Bedke and a companion rode into Gobo’s

camp early in the morning with a warning for the thirty year old Xhosa that he had breached the Two-mile Limit law that prohibited shepherders from feeding their animals within two miles of a landowners range (Garrett 2001: 56-57). Gobo disagreed with Bedke's measurements and immediately had his eyebrow shot off for non-compliance. Stunned, Gobo tried to recover his balance, but was struck on the head with the butt of Bedke's pistol before the assailant fired a second shot that entered through the back of Gobo's skull and stopped just short of the jugular vein. Still not defeated, Gobo was shot for a third and final time, "the bullet entering Gobo's side from the back and coming out near the navel" (2001: 57). In the time it took for Gobo to regain consciousness, Bedke and his companion had fled assuming they had finally killed the shepherd. "Gobo was eventually able to 'crawl about four and half miles to the Walter Matthews home east of Oakley, holding his intestines with one hand'" (2001: 57). Although he survived the initial attack, Gobo ultimately succumbed to his wounds a few days later. Bedke was charged with murder but after an initial trial resulted in a hung jury, a second attempt at justice proved unsuccessful and Bedke was found not guilty (Garrett 2001).

While this incredible account of South African Gobo Fango has left a trail of footprints throughout the Eastern Cape and the Mormon states in the U.S. it would not be traceable without the lasting impressions left behind by Makin, Garrett, and most recently by one of the South Africa's freedom fighters, Patric Tariq "de Goede" Mellet.¹⁵ Mellet, an African National Congress printing specialist turned heritage archivist and Cape slavery expert, is the author of the online blog "Cape-Slavery-Heritage: Exploring the Roots of the People of the Cape-South Africa."¹⁶ In Mellet's own words this historical website seeks to "present overviews on many facets of slavery, indigene history, events and red letter days." The blog is an internet location where personalized stories about slavery in South Africa as well as South African slaves are brought to light in an attempt to improve upon the "footnote" histories that exist about slavery in South Africa. One specific story posted by Mellet is entitled "The death of an Eastern Cape South African Slave amongst the Mormons in Idaho-1867" (2009) and is an account of the life of Gobo Fango taken exclusively from Garrett's article, but written from a unique, postcolonial South African perspective.

This South African perspective differs entirely from that of the colonial perspective presented in the Wynberg, Cape Town published *The 1820 Settlers of Salem* which completely skips the slave years of Gobo, never even mentioning his crippled foot, his subservient living conditions, or his sale to a different family. Mellet, on the other hand, opens with a declaration that despite what most official history books may claim, black, indigenous South Africans were part of a greater global slave trade. Mellet utilizes the life history of Gobo to illustrate the not uncommon practice of colonizers taking their indentured servants with

them after their sojourn in South Africa had come to an end. Mellet views Gobo as an oppressed slave, and very much not part of the family or the Mormon community despite what Talbot family lore may suggest. In striking contrast to the other versions of the tale we have cited, Mellet writes, "Gobo worked as a slave labourer and shepherd for the Talbots and life was extremely hard for him. All pretense that he was one of the family had fallen away. He lived in a shed in back of the Talbot's house." Mellet continues by relating the incident where Gobo's foot freezes due to poor living conditions during a bitterly cold, northern Utah winter. Mellet makes sure the reader understands that Gobo was sold by the Talbots to the Whitesides family, and later to Mormon Bishop, Edward Hunter, as an active example of slave trading and not gifted as some have suggested. However, Mellet's take here is probably too simplistic as he purposefully neglects to inform his followers of Gobo's final bequeaths. Mellet's blog post of the tale of Gobo Fango and the Mormon families he spent the majority of his life with leaves a necessary and critical lasting impression of Mormons on the religious landscape of South Africa.

When the footprints of Gobo Fango are combined with the trails of those recounting the sad tale, the result is a wide range of lasting impressions viewed from multiple perspectives. The story of Gobo, as told by Makin, is a colonial one, filled with awe inspiring tales of colonization and the taming of a wild country filled with even wilder people. The inclusion of Makin's narrative in Evan P. Wright's history of the Mormons in South Africa makes it a Mormon tale of conversion and the overcoming of great adversity in the quest for spiritual fulfillment and the psychical relocation to Zion (Wright n.d. (a): 155-157). Through the lens provided by Garrett, Gobo's life is also a tale of injustice on the wild frontier of the American West, where slaves are mistreated and gun fighters are forgiven of murder. Gobo has also become part of a Mormon family's pioneer heritage where youthful members are regaled with tales of his overcoming of outrageous obstacles and faithful adherence to covenants he would never have been allowed to make. This fact only further endears him to the family because in him they find a mythical ancestor who transcended the boundaries of age, race, and scriptural curses. And finally the literal life of Gobo Fango is a South African story of the struggle against oppressive colonizers and religiously justified racial prejudice brought to light by the ANC comrade Patric Tariq Mellet. The asymmetrical footprints that Gobo Fango left behind can be, and have been, used to create multiple impressions of Mormons and Mormonism on the religious, cultural, and political landscapes of South Africa.

Another trail of footprints currently being created about Mormons and South Africa can be found on a website where members are able to voice their concerns and opinions and visitors are welcome to view these discussions. The explanatory banner on www.stormfront.org's main page reads: "We are a community of White

Nationalists. There are thousands of organizations promoting the interests, values and heritage of non-Whites. We promote ours.” Inside this websites various forums one is able to navigate through an “International” section and into “Stormfront South Africa” where one particular thread is titled, “Mormons in South Africa.” The original contributor to the panel relates on February 7, 2011 the story of a friend and fellow “white nationalist” who converted to the Mormon Church after being introduced to its many sympathetic connections with the ideals of white supremacy by an Afrikaans member of the church in Utah. The author of this posting then forwards a series of comparisons, similarities really, between the history of the Afrikaner in South Africa and the Mormon pioneers in America before promoting his friend’s desire to “see all Afrikaaners and white South Africans in general convert to the LDS church.” The author himself is neither a South African nor a Mormon but he does conclude his thoughts by stating:

if Afrikaaner nationalists and white South Africans want to survive, fight back, grow and take back the country y’all built. Perhaps y’all should all become Mormon. Theological debates aside, I find the Mormons to be the most pro-white of ALL denominations/religious communities...As a white nationalist, if I were to become a Christian, I could see no other denomination as supportive of our cause then the LDS, even in comparison with Christian Identity.

This post, made by an individual in Montreal, Canada, sparks the response of two South Africans and one Mormon to name but a few. The South Africans have a hard time accepting the original poster’s stance that all South Africans should convert to the Mormon Church; however, one in particular does find some relatable qualities between his belief system and the social aspects of Mormonism, specifically in the Mormon focus on cultivating quality family relationships. In response to these somewhat negative replies, the original poster attempts to strengthen his argument that all white supremacists in South Africa should convert to the Mormon faith by citing the deficiencies of the Dutch Reformed Church in promoting large, white families, charity work among the poor, white classes, and self-reliance. The author goes as far as quoting the most racist of Mormon prophets, Brigham Young.

Eventually a Mormon member of the website sees the thread and comments on Feb 11, 2011:

Hey I’m a national socialist and a Mormon. I Joined the LDS church for many of the same reasons as your friend. Theology

aside I figured “by their fruits you will know them”, and they seemed the most healthy “mainstream” religion around. I’ve been LDS for 2 years now and am quite happy with my choice.

While the thread does not end with these remarks and in fact, continues with conversations veering into discussions about polygamy and the Fundamental Mormon movement in America, a large enough sample has been gleaned for our purposes here. The trail of footprints left behind by this website is thought provoking from a theoretical perspective and has the ability to create multiple impressions of both Mormons and South Africa. It is apparent from these conversations that individuals convert to the Mormon faith for various reasons and one of them is the church’s legacy of racial prejudice. However, as discussed in the introduction of this article, the total population of Mormons in South Africa during the National Party’s early reign was an insignificant figure of only seven thousand. Interestingly, the original contributor to the thread found on www.stormfront.org, believes that even after the Mormon proclamation abolishing the policies of racial discrimination that this version of Christianity was still the most ideologically in tune with the worldview of white nationalists.

A final lasting impression of the Mormon Church in South Africa I wish to discuss occurred in November, 2005 when a Mormon custodian was brutally murdered by a former Mormon missionary at the Mormon church in Paarl, South Africa. Dubbed by the media the “Crucifixion Killing” the death of Charles Jacobs was told and retold throughout South Africa for most of the month. Jacobs, a fifty three year member of the Klein Drakkenstein Branch of the Mormon Church was found by his brother brutally stabbed to death inside the Mormon-owned church building where he was both an active member as well as the caretaker. As reported in the *Sunday Times* Jacobs’s brother described the scene in the following manner. “I looked at his face and saw the blood which had streamed down his faced had dried. I thought of the movie *The Passion of the Christ*.” The article continues,

Jacobs said his brother’s hands were tied behind his back, he had been beaten with a cord, and his head had been punctured. Charles’s sides were pierced on either side of his stomach and his khaki shorts had been placed on his head, resembling “a crown”, Jacobs said. The word “Satun [sic]” was written in blood on the tiled floor. (Fredericks 2005)

Near the end of November the story was sensationalized in the *Australian*, an Australian newspaper, before being appropriated by www.informationliberation.

com, an online resource with the appetizing subtitle: “The news you’re not supposed to know....” The article, “Black magic, murder and madness in Satanist South Africa” uses the Jacobs murder as a backdrop to explore the existence of satanic cults in South Africa. “The ‘crucifixion killing’ is only the latest to be proclaimed occult-linked and reflects the unique hold Satanism has on the South African psyche,” the article reads. The piece leaves a lasting impression about Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa when it mentions that Jacobs’s murderer was a “defrocked priest whom Mormon elders fired” before linking this tragedy to the occult, black magic, and criminality in South Africa. While the author of the article does not explicitly examine any connections between the Mormon Church and Satanism, the inclusion of the Jacobs murder under such a headline has the ability to generate multiple lasting impressions of this peripheral church that may include connections with the crime underground, satanic ritual killings, and magic.

The concluding section of this article has focused on the current footprints about Mormons and Mormonism in South Africa that are being created today. The account of Gobo Fango is a fascinating path to follow as it flows from one side of the globe to the other before reappearing in some of the most unlikely locations. The lasting impressions being generated in this postcolonial generation about the murdered Xhosa slave are fascinating to discover especially when contrasted by the colonial and familial renditions discussed above. Other lasting impressions of Mormons dealing with their surface connections with former apartheid practices and ideologies leave one wondering just what this American version of Christianity is all about. The last trail of footprints mentioned are located directly on the religious landscape of South Africa as they were generated in a church building by an excommunicated Mormon brutally murdering an active, Mormon priesthood holder. While this story was sensational enough on its own, through the process of knowledge circulation it was rebroadcast through an article that linked it with black magic and satanic ritual crimes in South Africa, leaving behind a lasting impression of Mormons as victims and Mormons as psychotic killers simultaneously.

In locating and tracing footprints created by Mormons and about Mormons a surface history of the Mormon experience in South Africa has been proffered. From its unsuccessful beginnings in the 1850s and 1860s to its relatively fruitful last forty years, the Mormon Church has been defined in South Africa through multiple and diverse impressions. We have seen these impressions created through portrayals of this church in the press as well as on the internet. Mormons have continuously participated in this dialogue by printing tracts, generating positive news coverage through extra-missionary efforts such as baseball and chapel building, and more recently through the circulation of South African originated materials as exemplified in the retelling of the life of Gobo Fango

in the Mormon monthly magazine, *Friend*. The impressions that have been formulated throughout the over one hundred fifty years of Mormon history in South Africa are locatable only after these trails of footprints have been followed. Interestingly, many of the trails begin as a single path but are soon joined at intervals from unexpected sources. Eric Rosenthal's *Stars and Stripes in Africa*, A.E. Makin's *The 1820 Settlers of Salem*, and Patric Tariq Mellet's blog post about Gobo Fango are all examples of the many routes Mormons have trod on during their time on the South African religious landscape.

By focusing on the tracking of this knowledge and not on in-depth analysis this paper has allowed for a unique glimpse of this religion located on the margins of South Africa's religious landscape. Conversely, it has also permitted an equally rare portrayal of a country on the margins of the Mormon world. In religious studies such histories are themselves on the margins of the discipline and consequently the reader is left with a marginalized survey of marginalized subject matter. However, it is hoped that the results of the study are not marginal and have been informative for students and scholars concerned with religion and religions.

Notes

- 1 For more information on Mormonism's beliefs and practices regarding race see: Newell Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism* (1981b); Lester E. Bush Jr., "Mormonism's Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview" (1984); and Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (2003).
- 2 See <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t778308>.
- 3 See <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/south-africa/> and <http://www.southafrica.info> for the latest statistics.
- 4 See Phillip Jenkins's study "Letting-Go: Understanding Mormon Growth in Africa" (2009) for an in-depth analysis of the Mormon Church's growth rate in Africa. Current statistics show a membership population of 57,546 (<http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/south-africa>, accessed 6 June 2012).
- 5 For the precise dates and chronology of these pamphlets we owe the work of David J. Whittaker and his PhD dissertation "Early Mormon Pamphleteering" (1982) which was published in book form in 2003 by the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU studies.
- 6 This was very much the expected and common result of conversion into the Mormon Church in the nineteenth century. One good example of the emphasis and importance of emigration to Mormons can be found in Douglas J. Davies *Mormon Spirituality: Latter Day Saints in Wales and Zion* (1987).
- 7 This "scaling-down" occurred mainly because of the imminent threat of the increasing tension between Brigham Young's Utah and the United States government. For a

- general history of the Mormon Church see James Allen and Glen Leonard's *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (1976).
- 8 Smith was actually born in Humansdorp, Cape Province, South Africa (Wright n.d. (b): 2).
 - 9 Along with Rosenthal's work three others dealing with Mormons were published in South Africa during this period of "second impressions." The first, in Dutch, was printed in Cape Town in 1910 and is entitled, *De Mormonen, of "De Heiligen Der Laatste Dagen*. The other two are Afrikaans texts produced much later in 1981 and 1983. They are respectively A. J. van Staden's *Die Mormone* and Willem L. Steenkamp's *Wat is die Mormonisme?*.
 - 10 The reader should keep in mind that this is on a small scale as evidenced in Rosenthal's *Stars and Stripes in Africa* when he writes after mentioning baseball, "Yet this country hears so little of the Mormons that only when a dispute between certain seniors of the congregation ended in a court action at Johannesburg did the community open its eyes to discover that the religion of Joseph Smith was still alive in South Africa" (Rosenthal 1979: 103).
 - 11 Some readers familiar with the "Baseball Baptism" program practiced by many Mormon missionaries during the late 1950s and early 1960s would be mistaken to assume any connection to my findings here. The baseball program participated in by Dalton and his missionaries was never aimed at enticing young boys into baptism but at exposing the citizens of South Africa to a more socially viable view of Mormons and Mormonism. See D. Michael Quinn's "I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era," (1993) for more information on "Baseball Baptisms."
 - 12 A temple recommend is a card issued only to members of the church who have first been interviewed by two of their local leaders—usually a Bishop and Stake President—establishing them as worthy to enter into the temple. Worthiness is determined by the individual member's response to a series of standardized questions that range from the individual's moral character to their acceptance of current church leadership. See Robert A. Tucker's "Temple Recommend," in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (1992: 1446-1447).
 - 13 Until the dedication of the Johannesburg Temple Mormons in South Africa had to travel abroad in order to participate in the rituals performed in these sacred, set apart buildings.
 - 14 The date of Gobo's birth is approximate and based primarily on the inscription on his tombstone which states he was thirty years old at the time of his death, February 10, 1886 (Garrett 2001).
 - 15 For biographical information on Mellet see <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/patric-tariq-de-goede-mellet>.
 - 16 Website located at <http://cape-slavery-heritage.iblog.co.za>.

Works Cited

- Beijer, Johannes. 1863. *De Mormonen in Zuid-Afrika*. Groningen: P. Beijer.
- “Black Magic, Murder and Madness in Satanist South Africa.” 2005. *Information Liberation* (21 November 2005), <http://www.informationliberation.com/?id=3346>, accessed 1 May 2012.
- Bringhurst, Newell G. 1981a. “Mormonism in Black Africa: Changing Attitudes and Practices 1830-1981.” *Sunstone*, 6, 3, pp. 15-21.
- _____. 1981b. *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Brummer, N. J. 1910. *De Mormonen, of “De Heiligen Der Laatste Dagen.”* Kaapstad: De Z.A. Bijbelvereniging.
- Bush, Lester E. 1973. “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview.” *Dialogue*, 8, 1, pp. 11-68.
- Cannon, Jeffrey G. 2007. “Mormonism’s Jesse Haven and the early focus on proselytising the Afrikaner at the Cape of Good Hope, 1853-1855.” *Teologiese Fakulteit van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch*, 48, 3-4, pp. 446-456.
- Chidester, David. 1992. *Religions of South Africa*. London: Routledge.
- Clark, Stuart. 2011. “Thick Description, Thin History: Did Historians Always Understand Clifford Geertz?” In *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in the Social Sciences*, pp. 105-119. Edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Philip Smith, and Matthew Norton. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dalton, Don Mack. n.d. “A Baseball Story: It can be done, it was done.” Unpublished. Don Mack Dalton Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- Davies, Douglas James. 1987. *Mormon Spirituality: Latter Day Saints in Wales and Zion*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham.
- Dixon, Henry Aldous. n.d. “Dairy of Henry Aldous Dixon, 1861-1863.” Unpublished. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1915. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- “Facts and Statistics: South Africa.” 2011. *Newsroom* (31 December 2011), <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/facts-and-statistics/country/south-africa>, accessed 6 June 2012.
- Fredericks, Ilse. 2005. “‘Crucifixion’ killing shocks Mormons.” *Sunday Times* (6 November 2005), <http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/2005/11/06/crucifixion-killing-shocks-mormons>, accessed 1 May 2012.
- Garrett, H. Dean. 2001. “The Controversial Death of Gobo Fango.” In *Utah’s Lawless Fringe: Stories of True Crime*, pp. 52-62. Edited by Stanford J. Layton. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3-30. New York: Basic Books.
- Hartshorn, Leon R. 1972. “Wilford Woodruff: Man of Faith and Zeal.” *New Era*, January, p. 29.

- Haven, Jesse. n.d. "The Daily Journal of Jefse [sic] Haven." Unpublished. Church History and Archives Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.
- _____. June 8, 1853. *Some of the Principal Doctrines or Belief of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter Day Saints*. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- _____. June 17, 1853. *Celestical [sic] Marriage, and the Plurality of Wives!* L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- _____. September 15, 1853. *On the First Principles of the Gospel*. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- _____. October 8, 1853. *A Warning to All*. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- Hilmo, Tess. 2003. "Gobo Fango." *Friend*, March, p. 28.
- Hinckley, Gordon B. 1985. "Johannesburg South Africa Temple Dedicatory Prayer." *Temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (1 September 1985), <http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/johannesburg/prayer>, accessed 12 May 2012.
- Janda, Jakub. 2010. "Gary Kahn on South African Baseball." *Mister Baseball* (29 September 2010), <http://www.mister-baseball.com/gary-kahn-south-african-baseball>, accessed 1 May 2012.
- Jenkins, Philip. 2009. "Letting Go: Understanding Mormon Growth in Africa" *Journal of Mormon History*, 35, 2, pp. 1-25.
- Makin, A. E. 1971. *The 1820 Settlers of Salem (Hezekiah Sephton's Party)*. Wynberg, Cape Town: Juta and Co.
- Mauss, Armand L. 2003. *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Mellet, Patric Tariq. 2009. "The death of an Eastern Cape South African Slave amongst the Mormons in Idaho-1867." *Cape-Slavery-Heritage: Exploring the Root of the People of the Cape-South Africa* (28 July 2009), <http://cape-slavery-heritage.iblog.co.za/2009/07/28/the-death-of-an-eastern-cape-south-african-slave-amongst-the-mormons-in-idaho-1867/>, accessed 13 June 2012.
- _____. n.d. "Patric Tariq 'de Goede' Mellet." *South African History Online: Towards a People's History*, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/patric-tariq-de-goede-mellet>, accessed 13 June 2012.
- Monson, Farrell Ray. 1971. "History of the South African Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1853-1970." M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University.
- "Mormons in South Africa." 2011. *Stormfront* (7 February 2011), <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t778308/>, accessed 1 May 2012.
- Nibley, Hugh. 1992. "Temples: Meanings and Functions of Temples." In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, pp. 1458-1463. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan.
- Pina-Cabral, João de. 1997. "The Threshold Diffused: Margins, Hegemonies,

- and Contradictions in Contemporary Anthropology.” In *Culture and the Commonplace: Anthropological Essays in Honour of David Hammond-Tooke*, pp. 31-52. Edited by Patrick McAllister. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Pina-Cabral, João de and Frances Pine. 2008. “On the Margins: An Introduction.” In *On the Margins of Religion*, pp. 1-12. Edited by Frances Pine and João de Pina-Cabral. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Quinn, D. Michael. 1993. “I-Thou vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon ‘Baseball Baptism’ Era.” *Sunstone*, 93, pp. 30-44.
- Richards, Joseph. 1852. “The Work in Hindostan.” *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, 14, 34, pp. 541-542.
- Rosenthal, Eric. 1938. *Stars and Stripes in Africa*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.
- _____. 1968. *Stars and Stripes in Africa*. New revised edition. Cape Town: National Books Limited.
- _____. 1979. *Memories & Sketches: The Autobiography of Eric Rosenthal*. Johannesburg: A.D. Donker.
- Steenkamp, Willem L. 1983. *Wat is die Mormonisme?* Cape Town: N.G. Kerk-Uitgewers.
- Talbot, Henry James. n.d. “The Life of Henry James Talbot in South Africa.” Unpublished manuscript. Church History and Archives Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.
- Thomson, Dennis L. 1994. “African Religion and Mormon Doctrine: Comparisons and Commonalities.” In *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, pp. 89-99. Edited by Thomas D. Blakely, Walter E. A. van Beek, and Dennis L. Thomson. London: James Curry.
- Tucker, Robert A. 1992. “Temple Recommend.” In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, pp. 1446-1447. Edited by Daniel H. Ludlow. New York: Macmillan.
- van Staden, A. J. 1981. *Die Mormone*. Pretoria: Haum.
- Walker, William Holmes. 1855. *To the Intelligent Public*. L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, U.S.A.
- _____. 1943. *The Life Incidents and Travels of Elder William Holmes Walker and his association with Joseph Smith, the Prophet*. Published privately by Elizabeth Jane Walker Piepgrass.
- _____. 2003. *Missionary Journals of William Walker: Cape of Good Hope South Africa Mission 1852-1855*. Transcribed by Ellen Dee Walker Leavitt. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Print Services.
- “WHAT D’YA THINK UV THAT.” 1932. *Cape Times* (18 October 1932).
- Whittaker, David J. 1982. “Early Mormon Pamphleteering.” Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University.
- Wright, Evan P. n.d. (a). *A History of the South African Mission: 1852-1903*. Unpublished. A copy in the authors possession but can also be found in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University as well the Church History Library and Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

- _____. n.d. (b). *A History of the South African Mission: 1903-1944*. Unpublished. A copy in the authors possession but can also be found in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University as well the Church History Library and Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- _____. n.d. (c). *A History of the South African Mission: 1944-1970*. Unpublished. A copy in the authors possession but can also be found in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University as well the Church History Library and Archives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

