

# Barefoot to Zion - A Sesquicentennial Musical Background and Context

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## Introduction

A group of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the "Church") in Calgary, Alberta have decided to produce a play called "Barefoot to Zion" during the first weeks of May 2001. That play was written and originally produced as part of the sesquicentennial (150 year) anniversary celebration of the arrival of the pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley. It accordingly was aimed at a Utah audience, and makes no attempt to define its terms or assist someone not acquainted with the history of the Church and its teachings to follow the story.

Barefoot to Zion is entertaining and worth seeing for that reason alone. It would, in addition, be of special interest to anyone who wishes to understand the energy source behind the settlement of much of Western North America, including parts of Southern Alberta. However, a certain amount of background information is required to follow the story. It is my hope that this document will make Barefoot to Zion more understandable and enjoyable for a few of my friends who I intend to invite to see it, and to any other members of the audience who are unfamiliar with the Church.

I was not authorized by the Church or anyone else to produce this document. I therefore speak only for myself. That is appropriate since one of Barefoot to Zion's themes is that we each experience the process of conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our own way. Accordingly, what you have here is Bob McCue's take on those parts of the Church's history and beliefs necessary to understand Barefoot to Zion's story.

This document has several parts. Immediately following this introduction you will find a summary of the play. That is followed by a summary of the principal elements of the Church's history that provide most of the backdrop for the play. Next we examine some of the basic aspects of the world-view many members of the Church have that provides the other important aspect of Barefoot to Zion's context. Finally, I have developed a lexicon of the various terms used in the play that are likely to be foreign to non-members of the Church. The first occurrence of each lexicon term used in this document is highlighted for ease of reference. Most of the lexicon content, however, is only used in the play.

Despite my best efforts to be brief, this document is long enough to test most readers' patience. It should take about 30 minutes to read. That, I hope, is not too great an investment to make so that Barefoot to Zion can be enjoyed. My suggestion is that the sections headed "Barefoot to Zion – An Overview" and "History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints", and the lexicon, are essential reading for non-members of the Church who want to appreciate the play. The section headed "World View" contains additional information that will enhance a viewer's understanding of the play, but is not as important as the rest of the document for that purpose.

## Barefoot to Zion - An Overview

Barefoot to Zion is the story of a fictional English family, the Prescotts, who while living in England in the mid-1800s became converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The family is comprised of Robert and Elizabeth, and their children Katie (age 17), Will (age 12) and Tommy (age 9). They are considering immigration to the United States to join the many other members of the Church who were gathering there to build a community based on religious principles. Elizabeth, Katie and Will are in particular anxious to leave for the United States. The place of gathering, which moved from one location to another as the **Saints** (members of the Church) searched for a place where they could live in peace, was referred to as "**Zion**". The play's title, "Barefoot to Zion", refers to the fact that many pioneers walked across the American plains, on their way to Zion, in their bare feet.

Barefoot to Zion's themes relate largely to the individual and gradual nature of the process of conversion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the type of the faith required for the monumental sacrifices the Utah pioneers made.

## **History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- day Saints**

### *Joseph Smith*

Joseph Smith founded the Church in upstate New York in the early 1800s. As a teenager, Joseph was troubled by the way in which the various Christian churches in his community contradicted each other. This eventually led him to seek our Heavenly Father's guidance in prayer as to which church he should join, following the biblical injunction that he who asks of God will be given an answer. He did this on various occasions. On one of those, he was praying by himself in a grove of trees when a vision opened up to him in which he saw our Heavenly Father and his son Jesus Christ. During that vision, he was told that all of the churches then on the earth had lost part of the truth Jesus brought to the earth, and that if Joseph remained faithful, he would be eventually privileged to assist in restoring those truths. Over a number of years, Joseph received many visitations from angelic messengers who taught him the gospel and prepared him for the role he would have as the first **prophet** of Jesus Christ in modern times.

### *The Book of Mormon*

One of the messengers who appeared on a variety of occasions to Joseph Smith was an angel named **Moroni**, who indicated that he was a prophet of Jesus Christ and had lived on the American continent around 400 AD. Among the things Moroni taught the Prophet Joseph was that a group of people living in Jerusalem around 600 BC were inspired by God to flee their city just before the Babylonians destroyed it. They later built ships, and travelled by ocean to America. They kept many records of their history and the way in which they tried to follow God's teachings during the years between approximately 600 BC and 400 AD. The highlight of that history is its description of prophets who, near the time of Jesus' birth, predicted the miraculous signs that accompanied it as signalling the long awaited arrival of the Messiah. Later, prophets predicted his death, and the great earthquakes and other destructions that occurred in the Americas at that time. Shortly after these natural disasters subsided, Jesus visited his followers in the Americas as a resurrected being. In the New Testament, John 10:16, He referred to this visit while speaking to His disciples in Jerusalem when He said that He had to visit His other sheep who were not of the Jerusalem fold. Many legends of the peoples native to Central and South America echo these events. In particular, it is well documented that native Americans in several areas greeted the first European explorers with honour as emissaries of the great white skinned god who had visited and blessed their ancestors, and had promised to some day return to them.

Another prophet named **Mormon**, who was Moroni's father, summarized and compiled many of this people's records into one book. That book became known as the **Book of Mormon** as a result of the role Mormon played in putting it together. Mormon passed the book along to Moroni, who added a few concluding comments to it and then shortly before he died, hid it in a buried stone box for safekeeping. When the Prophet Joseph was of sufficient maturity, he was allowed to remove the Book of Mormon from its hiding place and through the power of God, he translated it into English.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ believe that the Book of Mormon is another testament to the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon stands with and supports the Bible in that regard. It contains the teachings of Jesus Christ that were among his followers on the American continent from approximately 600 BC to 400 AD in much the same way that the Bible contains a record of the followers of Christ in the area around Jerusalem.

### *The Power of Personal Conviction*

The Prescotts and other pioneers regularly went through an intensely personal, spiritual process that powered their lives. We cannot understand the Prescotts, or the pioneer movement, without understanding this process. Unfortunately, the play does not describe the Prescott's experience in this regard, probably because it is part of the context most members of the intended Utah audience would have already been familiar with. The best thing I can do to remedy this is to describe someone else's experience, and since I know my own better than any other, that is what I have chosen to write about. I

believe that doing this is the best way to shed light on how Joseph Smith's story could motivate thousands of people in the mid-1800s to leave their homes in Europe and move to the wilderness of America. That story has power today that is derived from the same individual process that moved immigrants across oceans, and pioneers over the North American plains.

I apologize in advance for the personal nature of the reflections I am about to share. There is, however, no other way I am aware of to adequately explain these things. And please do not feel that I am trying to persuade anyone of my point of view. Rather, I will try to describe my admittedly subjective experience and how it has affected me in hopes that this will help the reader understand why the Prescotts and other Church members of their day made the sacrifices and accomplished the things they did. Without understanding the passion members of the Church feel, and why they feel it, it is impossible to understand the pioneer movement.

The first reaction of many people to the above story of visions and angels ranges from polite amusement to audible laughter. That reaction is often followed by confusion when they learn how many respected and successful people believe these things. To understand how a thoughtful individual, either in the Prescotts' day or in ours, can come to believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that the story about visions and angel is true, we must start with the idea that Joseph Smith was either a prophet of God or a monstrously successful fraud. There is no middle ground. If he was a fraud, he should be found out so that people can be warned to steer clear of him and the church he founded. If he was a prophet who saw God and regularly visited with angels, the information he had to share as a result of those experiences is important. Therefore, it is worth doing some research to see what this Joseph Smith character is about.

There are two primary areas of research with regard to Joseph Smith that can be easily conducted. First, there is the Church itself as it stands today. The Bible teaches us that we will know whether things are of God by their "fruits"; that is, by what they produce. Good fruits come from God; bad fruits do not. The Church has an enviable record of promoting family values and helping people live full, joyful, productive lives. While this topic is far too broad for a summary document like this one, it is safe to say that the Church passes with flying colours virtually every test it can be put to respecting how useful it is to its members and how much good it does.

The Book of Mormon itself is by far the most important thing Joseph Smith left us to test his claim to prophetic stature. He said that an angel gave him the book, and that he translated it by the power of God. As a result of the evidence of many witnesses, we know that he did this work during a roughly three-month period, and that his method of translation was to dictate the text to a scribe as he translated it. He made only a few minor corrections to his first dictated draft. We also know that he was an intelligent man who had little formal education, as was commonly the case during those times.

I find fascinating the way in which Joseph Smith produced the Book of Mormon. My interest in this aspect of that book results from the amount of writing I am required to do by my occupation. I am a lawyer, and work primarily with matters related to corporate structures and taxation. For years I published on average at least one significant paper each year, and produce lengthy analytical documents for other purposes on a regular basis.

Writing is a process of creating threads and discovering how they will most harmoniously and pleasingly come together, to a great extent through trial and error. When I write, I typically dictate the first draft and then use a word processor to make the changes necessary to complete my work. It is not uncommon to go through ten to twenty drafts before I am prepared to publish a paper; it takes a great deal of thought and effort to weave together a complex document. The longer the document, the more difficult the creative and writing process becomes. In fact, the difficulty of producing a document goes up exponentially with its length. That is, it is much more than twice as difficult to produce a one hundred page document than it is a fifty pager.

In my view, the Book of Mormon is a marvellous thing given what I know about how it was produced, the nature of the man who produced it, and how difficult it is to write a complex document of any kind. Using

small print, the Book of Mormon is well over 500 pages long - many times longer than the papers I usually write. Yet it was produced in little more than the time it takes me, with my dictaphone and word processor, to produce an eighty page paper. On the basis of my experience as a writer, I cannot imagine how even a highly educated person who is a brilliant writer could produce that fascinating, complex book by dictating a first draft and then making a few minor changes to it.

Of even more interest to me are the Book of Mormon's many cultural and linguistic attributes that scholars have discovered over the years. These aspects of the book indicate that its author must have had an understanding of ancient Near Eastern and American customs, history, flora and fauna, literary forms etc. No one in Joseph Smith's day had such an understanding. Computer based linguistic analysis of the syntax and language used in the Book of Mormon indicates that different persons authored its various parts. This is consistent with the book's indication that it is a compendium of materials written by various persons over a 1,000-year period, compiled and abridged by Mormon, and translated by Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon contains numerous names of people, places and things in both the Americas and the Near East that in Joseph Smith's time were not known to have been used in any language. However, as archaeologists discover more about ancient Near Eastern and American history, they are slowly finding reference to these names. Recently, for example, the name "Nahom" was found inscribed on a stone in the Arabian desert. The inscription dates to about 700 BC. The Book of Mormon indicates that in about 600 BC certain events happened at a place called "Nahom" in the Arabian desert not far from where the stone was found.

There is much more of interest to say on the topic of external evidence of the Book of Mormon's authenticity than I have space or time to write here. Critics have tried without success ever since the book was published to prove it to be a fraud. If the Book of Mormon is a fraud, it is a clever fraud indeed.

The most interesting thing about the Book of Mormon, and the one that has led millions of people to join the Church, is a promise found near the end of the book. As I noted above, the prophet Moroni added a few comments at the conclusion of the book before hiding it. In those comments he indicated that the Book of Mormon was written for the purpose of being discovered at a later time and being another testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ. He said that he was commanded by God to hide the book for that reason. He indicated that anyone who had the opportunity to read the book should ask our Heavenly Father with a sincere heart if it was of Him, and promised that He would answer that plea.

Most members of the Church, whether they joined it when old enough to make that choice for themselves or whether they were raised within the Church, have put Moroni's promise to the test not once, but many times. The nature of the experience that consistently follows doing that is one of the main reasons so many people devote significant amounts of energy to being members of the Church. This, for example, gave the Prescotts and others like them the conviction and strength to do what they did. The experience that for many people follows putting Moroni's promise to the test is difficult to describe. Doing so is a little like trying to convey the excitement of the final moments of a great sporting event to someone who was not there and is not even familiar with the sport. Please bear with me as I try to do that.

Our Heavenly Father's spirit is often described in the Bible as the "Comforter". In my estimation, that is an appropriate name since peace and comfort are the dominant feelings I associate with being guided by His spirit. I was 18 years old when I first had this experience. I was sitting at the dining room table in my grandparents' home in Lethbridge, Alberta, taking a break from the university assignment I was working on. For some weeks I had been thinking about the things my parents had taught me about God, life, the Church etc. I was trying to decide what to do with myself in terms of a career and continued university studies, and had developed a desire to know if my parents' teachings were true and how they should fit into my life. And so for the first time, I was reading the Book of Mormon with a real desire to understand it and know if it was God's word. I had prayed numerous times during those weeks, asking Heavenly Father to let me know if that book was His work, or the work of uninspired men.

As I read that morning I felt impressed, as I had been on many prior occasions, with the wisdom the Book of Mormon contained and the beauty of many of its passages. Something then happened that was markedly different from anything I had ever before experienced. While reading, I felt a thrill and peace

pass through my mind and body, and was overcome by a powerful and unmistakable impression that the Book of Mormon was produced by the power of God; that no man could have written this book on his own; and particularly that no man like Joseph Smith in the circumstances outlined above could have written it. This wonderful feeling broke over me in waves for perhaps a minute, creating a thrilling, physical sensation of excitement, warmth and peace. I am sure that medical science could wire me up and tell me exactly which hormones and chemicals were coursing through my system to produce those feelings. There is no doubt that something happened at the physiological level to cause the sensations that accompanied this spiritual experience. I have had the same sort of experience on many other occasions during my adult life, both while studying the Gospel and while asking my Heavenly Father for guidance as to how to proceed with life's important decisions. If we seek His influence in our lives, He will guide us by sending feelings of comfort and peace similar to those I described above when we are on the right track. When off track, we will tend to feel darkness, uncertainty and emotional and spiritual discomfort, and will therefore know that we need to change course.

I am suspicious of the spiritual authenticity of feelings of any kind that are produced as a result of group experience. There is a thrill, much like the one I described above, that sometimes comes to me when I am in a large group of similarly minded people, especially when aided by powerful music and visual stimuli. The group could be gathered at a sporting event, political rally, religious service, or any one of many other types of meetings. This phenomenon is well documented in both the sociological and psychological literature. The thing that makes the feelings I associate with our Heavenly Father's spirit so unique, trustworthy and influential in my life is that they can be produced when I am by myself, attempting to communicate with Him. I do not rely on any other human being for them. That is why the Church did not die with Joseph Smith. Our Heavenly Father's spirit propels and energizes the Church now, as it did during Joseph Smith's short life.

Membership in the Church and belief in the Book of Mormon and the story above regarding Joseph Smith, visions and angels is based on intensely personal experience with God and the feelings that come from that experience. This is what has given the Church its vitality during the past almost 200 years, and what today motivates millions of people around the world in every cultural context imaginable to devote a large percentage of their energy to living within the framework outlined by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as taught by the Church. And most importantly for purposes of understanding Barefoot to Zion, this is what motivated the Prescotts and thousands of others to gather to Zion, even though this meant leaving their homes in Europe, coming to America, and then walking across the plains to an uncertain future in the Utah desert.

#### *Biblical Foreshadowing of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon*

The Bible contains many scriptures that we believe foretold Joseph Smith and the role he played in restoring the gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:3, it speaks of a great falling away. In our view, this occurred when society rejected Christ's message by killing all of his **apostles**. For many centuries, man was left to follow Christ's teachings on his own. As a result, many atrocities were committed in His name and doctrinal confusion resulted in the establishment of the spectrum of Christian churches with us today. Likewise, the New Testament refers in Acts 3:21 to the "restoration of all things", and indicates that this restoration would precede Christ's second coming. We believe that Joseph Smith was the instrument used by our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ to restore all things related to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that were lost when Jesus and his apostles were killed.

One of the things restored the earth through Joseph Smith was the organization of the Church as it existed at the time of Christ. Accordingly, since Joseph Smith's day there has always been one prophet and twelve apostles at the head of the Church of Jesus Christ. We believe that these men have the same powers that **Peter, James and John** and the Saviour's other apostles exercised while they were on the earth. Those powers include the ability to see future events in certain circumstances, to heal the sick, etc.

#### *Zion*

The concept of "**Zion**" was and continues to be central to the Church's philosophy. Zion is a place where the pure in heart gather. During the early days of the Church, Zion was where the Church's centre was

located. All members of the Church were encouraged to gather to Zion in order to create the critical mass necessary to build an enduring community based on religious freedom and principles. Predictably, an influx of large numbers of Church members into any area made the people who already lived there feel threatened. This perceived threat was largely responsible for the persecution members of the Church experienced in various parts of the Eastern United States where they attempted to gather to form Zion. They were driven from New York, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois, and eventually fled to Utah as a result of that persecution. Thousands died at the hands of mobs and because of the difficulties occasioned by being driven from one place to another without adequate preparation.

Nauvoo, Illinois was the gathering place for Zion at the time the Prescotts were considering emigrating from England. Nauvoo was established by Joseph Smith and his followers on a swampy piece of land along the Mississippi river. It eventually grew to be a beautiful city, larger than Chicago at the time. As Nauvoo became more powerful, the persecution that had driven the Church members there arose in the surrounding area. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were eventually murdered by a mob intent on driving the Church out of Illinois. Brigham Young, who succeeded Joseph Smith as the second prophet of the Church, made the decision to move the body of the Church, and therefore Zion, to Utah starting what to this day is the largest mass movement of people across the American continent.

While Zion was being established at Nauvoo, Brigham Young and a number of the other Apostles were sent to Europe to do missionary work. The message the Prescotts heard them preach there was that the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the authority to administer it in His name had been restored to Joseph Smith, and that all who believed that message were called to gather in Zion. They were referred to the Book of Mormon as the primary evidence of Joseph's claim to legitimacy as a prophet, and invited to test Moroni's promise that God will answer anyone who prayerfully and sincerely reads that book and asks Him if it is His work.

Thousands of converts in Britain and elsewhere throughout Europe read the Book of Mormon, had the type of experience I described above, joined the Church and emigrated from their homes to join the Saints in Zion. The play's indication that Robert Prescott gave a number of other families their passage money to America is not surprising. Most emigrants to Zion had trouble finding enough money for that adventure. Indeed, they were attracted to some extent by the dream of escaping relative poverty in Europe for the wealth of opportunity that America offered. Robert was one of a small percentage of affluent early converts to the Church.

#### *Brigham Young and the Trek West*

History and legend have imbued Brigham Young with a character larger than life. Most of the Church's most violent opponents during the Prophet Joseph Smith's life felt that when he died, the Church would die too. Joseph Smith was a classic charismatic leader, and many felt that without his powerful personal influence the Church could not exist. Brigham Young did not have Joseph's ability to move people through his use of language. Nonetheless, as the second prophet of Jesus Christ in modern times he masterminded what we believe was the inspired exodus of many thousands of pioneers to Utah and led the development of a thriving community there.

To appreciate the enormity of Brigham Young's undertaking with respect to Utah, one must first understand how Utah was perceived in those days. One of the best-known explorers of that era had indicated a short time prior to the pioneer exodus to Utah that he would give a huge sum of money to anyone who could ripen an ear of corn in the Great Basin, which includes Utah. That is, it was generally thought that the weather was so harsh and climate so dry in Utah that it would not be possible to raise crops there.

The Church's leadership had been studying for sometime how it would respond if it was forced to leave Nauvoo, and it had sent exploration parties to a number of other areas in that regard. From time to time, California, parts of Oregon, and Vancouver Island had been considered as possible places for the establishment of a permanent Zion. Utah was chosen, oddly enough, in large part because of its remoteness and lack of apparent resources. Brigham Young and the other Church leaders felt that Utah was so desolate that they would be left alone there long enough to create a Zion that their enemies could

not destroy. They also felt that in Utah, they could fulfill the biblical prophecy that the **Lord** would make the desert blossom like the rose.

The trek from Nauvoo to Utah began in the winter, on short notice, as Barefoot to Zion indicates. One of the first stopping places was called "Winter Quarters", near what is now Omaha, Nebraska. That place might be charitably described as a shantytown where one might wait out winter, and gather provisions and equipment for the trip west. Thousands died during the move from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters, and then later along the trail from Winter Quarters to Salt Lake Valley. Many of those who made the trip were not prepared for it. In particular, many women and children died. An historian who is a leading expert with regard to pioneer movements in North America, and who is not a member of the Church, indicated after studying the Mormon pioneers that in his view, the Mormon men were impressive; but the Mormon women were incredible.

The mass movement of member of the Church from the Eastern United States across to Utah continued for many years. Stories of faith, difficulty and joy along the pioneer trail are legend. One noteworthy story is that of an 18-year-old boy who near the end of the journey, in an early winter storm, spent many heroic hours carrying weaker members of his party through an icy river. He died shortly thereafter as a result of over exertion and exposure. Many others, however, survived as a result of his efforts. Brigham Young is said to have wept upon hearing of this group's travail, and that boy's sacrifice for his family and travelling companions.

The pioneer journals that have survived to this day are among the most treasured of family heirlooms. Death was the pioneers' constant companion along the trail, as were love, joy, camaraderie and faith. The Prescotts felt death's cold breath on one of their children along the trail. And Will Prescott learned to dance on bleeding feet.

The logo chosen by the Church to celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the arrival of the first pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley could not be more fitting. It is the silhouette of a man and a woman bending their backs into the effort of pulling a loaded handcart, above which are found the words, "faith in every footstep".

In was in this context of excitement and faith with respect to the establishment of a Zion where religious freedom and economic prosperity would rule the day that the Prescotts made their decision to leave their comfortable home in England and embark upon a pioneer adventure.

#### *Further Pioneer Settlements*

While the Prescotts and the other pioneers in Barefoot to Zion did not come to Southern Alberta, other real pioneers did. As the Church's population in Utah grew during the mid to late 1800s, it became clear that a larger land base would be required to support all those who wished to come to Zion. Primarily for this reason, the Church's leaders sent colonizing parties to break ground for communities elsewhere in Utah as well as in a variety of other places, including parts of what are now Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, Arizona, Mexico and Southern Alberta. Other members of the Church left Utah without being asked to do so by the Church and helped to settle Oregon, Washington, California and other areas.

Many of those called to engage in this ongoing pioneering effort were among the Salt Lake Valley's earliest settlers. Imagine just having tamed your part of the Utah desert and being comfortably settled in a home and community, and then being called by a prophet of God to take your family to bring civilization to another wilderness in order that future generations of immigrants to Zion would have a place to earn their livelihood. I marvel at both the foresight of the Church's early leaders in this regard, and the faith of those who were called upon to carry out their plan.

In many of these new locations, the irrigation systems and agricultural practises that had made the settlement of the Salt Lake Valley successful were modified for application, and in most cases produced thriving communities. A large chunk of Western North America can trace the seeds of its settlement to this process. The histories of many families with roots in Southern Alberta include stories related to what must have seemed for generations to be a pioneering way of life that would never end. One such story

involves Marlin and Rhoda Allred. Their families had come across the plains to Utah, and later moved to Arizona as that area was settled in the mid to late 1800s. At about the time they married, Canada made homestead property available on certain conditions and members of the Church had already established the communities of Cardston, Raymond, Magrath and a few others in Southern Alberta. Meanwhile, agricultural land in Arizona was not readily available.

Marlin and Rhoda decided to start their life together in Canada, and so the day after they were married in Mesa, Arizona at about the turn of the century, they boarded a train and came to Canada. They apparently scandalized some of the other passengers on the trip up to Canada with their amorous, newly wed behaviour. They spent their first Canadian winter in a sod-roofed dugout in the side of hill near Raymond, Alberta, enjoying weeks of sub -30 degree Celsius weather. One might wonder how Marlin talked his 17 year old bride into that move, and how many times during the course of their first winter together he had to explain exactly what he had meant when he assured her in Arizona that it would not be "too cold" in Canada.

### **World View**

We all have religious beliefs that are part of the basic lens through which we see and interpret the world. This lens is so fundamental that most of us are not even aware of it. For this reason, it is important that I outline some of the Prescotts' beliefs that motivated both their and other characters' actions in the play. To a significant extent, these beliefs continue to inform the way most members of the Church approach life.

#### *The Main Purpose of Life is to Experience Joy*

We believe that joy is not reserved for the life after death, but rather that joy is to be experienced here and now, and that man's central purpose is to experience joy. A scripture in the Book of Mormon indicates, "... man is that he might have joy". We believe that joy comes largely as a result of the relationships we develop within our families and our communities. Joy is derivative, not primary. That is, if we seek joy and do things for that purpose, we are unlikely to find it. However, if we live our lives serving and loving other human beings, joy will be the natural result of our everyday life experience. This wonderful way of looking at life confirms what we all intuitively know - that material wealth and the ability to pursue exotic pleasures does not necessarily make a happy life. Many of us know wealthy people who are miserable and dysfunctional. We also know other people who have little more than a set of wonderful relationships around them, and as a result live joyful, peaceful lives. Barefoot to Zion explores this idea through Robert Prescott's changing attitude respecting the material things he provides to his family and other aspects of his relationship with them.

Each congregation of our Church is nothing more than an extension of the family. The responsibilities we are given within the congregation are expressly designed to put us in contact with others in such a way that we can develop loving relationships and serve each other in a manner that resembles our Heavenly Father's service to us. By acting in this fashion toward others, we develop the ability to love. The greater our ability to love, the more we resemble our Heavenly Father. The more we resemble Him, the greater the joy we will experience.

While life is full of great challenges and at times, pain, we believe that joy can and should be experienced here in great abundance. We do not need to wait for life after death to find joy. Joy in the midst of problems is much like the calm water that lies beneath the surface of a turbulent sea. Despite the difficulty of our current circumstances, we are able to go beneath life's superficial prickliness at any time to find the peace that exists in understanding the Saviour's plan for us, and the manner in which life's difficulties shape us into His image.

#### *The Saviour's Plan*

Robert refers to the "Saviour's plan" in one of his songs. We consider the Saviour's plan to be that every human being has the ability to become like the Saviour and return to live with Him and our Heavenly Father after this life. The Saviour's plan is premised on the idea that our Heavenly Father created this earth for sole purpose of allowing us to come to it and have a variety of experiences that we could not have in other ways. Those experiences are designed to help us to become like the Saviour and our

Heavenly Father. As we become more like our Heavenly Father, our capacity to experience joy increases. Learning from our own decisions, and exercising our agency, is fundamental to the Saviour's plan.

#### *Freedom of Choice*

One of the most important parts of our theology is the idea that we each develop or do not develop, rise or fall, etc. as a result of choices we make. We refer to this as our "agency". No one can take this ability to choose from us, not even our Heavenly Father. His commandments, seen in that light, are best understood as sensible, wise rules established by a loving parent. He hopes we will follow them, and fears for us to the extent we choose not to. However, He will not attempt to force us to obey Him. In our dealings with other human beings, particularly those within our own families, the Gospel teaches us to follow the same model. We are to exercise influence in almost all cases not by force or dictate, but by love, persuasion and patience. Having done all we can in that regard, we are to leave others to make their own decisions and to enjoy or suffer the consequences that naturally follow. In *Barefoot to Zion*, we watch Robert Prescott struggle with issues related to agency as he deals with his children's growing independence. Most parents will relate to this.

#### *The Restrictive Nature of Religion*

The more liberal elements of society are sometimes critical of religion in general as a result of the restrictions it places on people. For example, rules related to chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage, abstinence from the use of drugs etc. seem to many these days to be out of touch with modern life.

An interesting paradox the Gospel teaches is that to become free, we must submit ourselves to our Heavenly Father's rules. This may seem contradictory. However, when the consequences of disobeying those rules are considered, there is a strong argument to be made that obedience maximizes our ability to make choices in the future. Therefore, by choosing to subject ourselves to the Gospel's rules, we become freer. Framed in the context of the above discussion of agency, the question to ask is, "If I take a particular action, will it increase or decrease my ability to do other things I may want or need to do in the future, and what will the effect of my choice likely be on those around me?" We should make the choices, in general, that will maximize the freedom that both we, and those around us, will enjoy.

Consider, for example, the misuse of drugs and alcohol. There is no question that the moderate use of recreational drugs and alcohol can produce some transient pleasure. In certain cases, for example, people under the mild influence of drugs or alcohol will be more comfortable in certain social surroundings than would otherwise be the case. There is some utility in this. Consider, however, the cost at which this limited utility comes. A percentage of people who begin to use drugs and alcohol recreationally will become addicted to them. This will dramatically limit their ability to develop themselves, and will cause great suffering in their lives as well as the lives of their families and others who love them. In addition, many people who use drugs or alcohol, recreationally or as addicts, will harm innocent others. They regularly kill or maim other people in car accidents and dispense sexual and other types of abuse.

I recently heard on the CBC a documentary respecting certain health related costs of drug and alcohol abuse. Among other things, this program indicated that the cost to Canadian society of dealing with each baby born this year with fetal alcohol syndrome is expected to be in excess of \$2,000,000 during that baby's life. These babies will almost certainly have severe learning disabilities and behavioural problems that will make it impossible for most of them to get through school. And they will have a greater than 80% chance of becoming involved in criminal activity because of the anti-social effects of this completely preventable illness. All of this because their mothers chose to use alcohol while pregnant.

It is easy to see why an all-knowing, loving Heavenly Father would look at the utility created on the one side of the drug and alcohol use equation, and the damage on the other and would suggest to His children they not misuse those substances. The agency, or future ability to make choices, of many people who misuse drugs and alcohol will be reduced by their actions in this regard. The same analysis could be conducted with regard to each of the other commandments our Heavenly Father has provided to us, with similar conclusions reached. Therefore, as indicated above, a strong argument can be made that

we will maximize our choices and opportunities for growth and joy throughout our lives by choosing to obey our Heavenly Father's commandments. Hence, the paradox - by choosing obedience to certain rules, we become freer; we increase our agency.

The unavoidable, hard fact that too many of us bang our heads on is that we cannot choose to live without rules and consequences. We can only choose which rules we will be subject to. If, for example, we choose to misuse drugs and alcohol, we subject ourselves to the set of rules and consequences that use dictates. If we choose to avoid those things, we are subject to a different set of rules.

The way in which we all are subject to the consequences of our actions is illustrated in Barefoot to Zion in myriad ways. I unfortunately cannot share any of those here without giving away too much of the story.

### *Final Judgement*

We believe that this life is a developmental or testing period during which we are given the opportunity to become like our Heavenly Father. However, we recognize that there are massive inequities in the experience human beings receive during this life. Take, for example, the Quechewa Indian who lives out his life in the mountains of Peru. He is addicted to cocaine and wood alcohol from childhood, and dies of old age at 40. His life is largely ruled by addiction, the need to provide the bare essentials to stay alive, and superstition. Surely our Heavenly Father will not judge such a person in the same manner as someone raised with all the advantages of a middle class North American life.

In our view, there will be a period of time after this life and before we are judged during which every individual will receive the same opportunity to develop himself that each other individual has received. Only after that opportunity has been provided will we be judged and go to the place we have prepared ourselves for, where we will continue to live, associate with other people, and in many ways to progress eternally. We will go to a place inhabited by other people who have become like us. Those who have become most like their Heavenly Father will go to dwell with Him, and will live the type of life He lives.

We do not see this judgment day as a time at which people will protest their innocence and claim to belong somewhere they do not. Rather, the judgment day will be a moment of perfect clarity where we will all see ourselves for what we have become, and will each willingly go to the place where others like us will be waiting. 1 Corinthians 13:12 describes our perception of reality during our lives on earth as "seeing through the glass darkly", a reference to how light used to pass through the primitive glass panes used in biblical times while images would not. That scripture then contrasts such limited vision with seeing "face to face". At the judgement day, we will for the first time truly see ourselves face to face.

I am reminded of the middle-aged former college basketball player who, after not playing the game for years, goes into a big gym with many courts. He intends to get into a game and revisit his former glory. He instinctively goes to the court where all the best players are, since that is where he used to play. However, after watching the speed at which the players whirl up and down the court, he realizes that he does not belong there, and leaves to look for a game that better suits his skills and physical condition. That is what I anticipate the final judgement will be like. I should note parenthetically that the "seeing through the glass darkly" version of this experience involves the same old guy going to the gym, and foolishly stepping onto the court with the college players. In this case, he quickly finds that his mind is writing cheques that his body cannot cash, and he sheepishly withdraws as soon as an opportunity to do so presents itself.

### *Deathbed Repentance*

Reference is made at the end of the play to deathbed repentance. We believe that we each have to remake ourselves in the image of Our Heavenly Father, and that we will be given a full opportunity to do so during this life and the next, before we are judged. It is obvious that anything that happens on our deathbed will have little impact on what we achieved during this life. However, we believe that in the life to come we will have the opportunity to make any changes we did not have a proper chance to make in this life. Accordingly, the reference to it being inappropriate to judge a person for his sinful, miserable life is correct. No one can tell whether his genetic makeup, circumstances of upbringing etc. gave him a full opportunity to make good decisions in this life. And we know that our Heavenly Father will provide him

that opportunity if he did not have it here. It is therefore possible within our theology for a person who has lived an apparently evil life to repent on his deathbed, and as a result of changes he makes and opportunities he takes advantage of in the next life, to be successful in his attempt to become like our Heavenly Father. However, it is likely that each of us will be the same person (with the same good and bad tendencies) in the next life as we are in this.

### *Marriage and Family*

Woven throughout Barefoot to Zion, and in some places put front and centre, is the importance of marriage and family. There is one song, in particular, that may leave the audience with the idea that single persons are somehow less than married persons and may be limited in their ability to enjoy life's benefits. We believe in the importance of marriage and family and that many of life's joys come through that association. However, we also believe that every person, whether single or married, has the ability to become like our Heavenly Father and enjoy everything that He has. There are many reasons for which some people go through much or all of their lives without a marriage companion. The challenges we each face and the manner in which we face them are what provide us with the opportunity to become like our Heavenly Father. For some people, part of the challenge is being single. We believe that single people, through the way in which they share their lives with those around them, have every opportunity in this life to find great joy and will in the life to come be able to experience any aspects of family life that they may have missed here.

Part of our emphasis on marriage relates to the fact that we believe marriages performed under the proper authority will endure eternally. That is, a husband and wife and their children can continue in that relationship through death and into the next life. This is something many people intuitively believe, but it is not taught by any other Christian faith with which I am familiar.

### *Work Ethic*

There is a strong work ethic in the Church's philosophy. The idea that we all have the capacity to become like our Heavenly Father is followed closely by the idea that we must work as hard as we can to become like Him. We prize achievement, particularly that of those who do not have great natural ability. The idea of the untrained rich kid, Will Prescott, going to sea as ship's boy and doing so well that he would be paid a man's wage at the end of the voyage is consistent with our idea of success.

### *Spiritual Man*

Robert Prescott also refers to becoming a "spiritual man". This idea fits into our culture in much the same way as it does into many other Christian faiths. We are to try to do what the Saviour would do with each decision we make throughout each day. Many Church members attempt to do this by guiding themselves through a process of prayerful decision-making and the type of feelings I described above with respect to my conversion experience. The idea, of course, applies to both men and women in its broadest sense. However, as men seem to be naturally less inclined toward spiritual things, it has particular application to them.

Another aspect of being a "spiritual man", put in 90s terminology, involves being in touch with one's feminine side. A man should be sensitive, appreciate the arts, do the dishes and change diapers. He should truly consult with his spouse and make decisions with her in a collaborative way instead of "laying down the law" and "wearing the pants" in the family.

While male members of the Church are far from perfect, in my view it is fair to say that the ideal of spiritual sensitivity and respect for the rights and talents of women is clearly established by the Church as being important, and any movement in the opposite direction is actively discouraged. It is difficult to attend a Church meeting without hearing many references to this concept. Since my wife will read this, let me acknowledge again that male Church members are in general, and I am in particular, far from perfect. While we try to do what we should, we often do not succeed. And we empathize with the man's prayer from the Red Green Show which says, "I am a man; but I can change; if I have to; I guess." To fully appreciate that statement, it must be either heard on the Red Green Show, or said in a monotone voice - that pauses longer - - and becomes more depressed - - - at each semi-colon.

### *Lay Ministry*

During the Prescott's time a lay ministry ran the Church. The same is true today. While the Church has a certain number of paid administrators, as one might expect given its size, even today we do not have paid clergy who lead our congregations. Volunteer men and women teach lessons, preach sermons, organize activities and administer the affairs of each congregation. We believe that the most important religious experience comes as a result of doing, not listening to sermons. As a result, virtually every adult member of the congregation and many of the teenagers have some responsibility. We teach classes to children, teenagers and adults. We run activity-based programs for all age groups that are designed to help members of the congregation develop their talents. The production of Barefoot to Zion is one example of this type of activity. We believe that much of life's joy comes from serving each other, and that the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are best understood as a result of that type of experience. The manner in which the pioneers organized themselves and helped each other while travelling across the plains illustrates this principle.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a theoretical construct for us. It is a working model, and each week we try to make it work as a result of our Church activities. We view the organization of the Church as neither more nor less than a spiritual gymnasium, with the opportunities we are given to serve and love each other being the weights and exercise programs that will help us become like our Heavenly Father. The relationships that are a natural result of this interaction with other human beings are a significant source of joy for most of us.

### *Blind Faith*

We do not believe in blindly following our religious leaders. We believe that our Heavenly Father will deliver the same message to each individual lay member of the Church that He delivers to the Prophet, insofar as it affects that individual. For example, the Church would not have told Robert Prescott to emigrate from England. Robert would have been told that the Prophet had called upon all members of the Church to come to Zion and would have been invited to go to his Heavenly Father in prayer to determine whether that was His will for Robert. The intensely individual nature of that process is illustrated by the different ways in which Robert and the members of his family dealt with that call to Zion. This idea also echoes in Katie's statement that the **Spirit**, not her father, had converted her to the gospel.

### *Priesthood Blessings*

Near the end of Barefoot to Zion, reference is made to a "laying on of hands" and "priesthood blessings". The laying on of hands as a method of providing a blessing of health was well known in biblical times. The New Testament speaks of the elders anointing the heads of sick people with oil and blessing them by laying hands on their heads and praying for them. We use the same practice today. Sometimes priesthood blessings are provided for the purpose of healing and other times for the purpose of providing emotional support. We believe that the effectiveness of a priesthood blessing is premised primarily upon the faith of the person receiving it, and secondarily on the faith of the person providing it and others concerned with the recipient of the blessing.

### *The Word of Wisdom*

During Joseph Smith's time, the use of alcohol and tobacco was common and medical science had not advanced to the point where doctors had reason to express serious concern in that regard. One of the revelations Joseph Smith received from our Heavenly Father indicated that alcohol, tobacco, tea and coffee were bad for our bodies and should not be used. This counsel has come to be known as the "Word of Wisdom". The Word of Wisdom is in fact much broader than an injunction against the use of coffee, alcohol and tobacco. It is quite simply counsel that our bodies are sacred, and should be treated as such. That means not taking into them anything that would be harmful, and otherwise taking care of them as well as we can. We believe in making the best use possible of medical advice and technologies in that regard, and living our lives to the fullest degree possible.

### *Naiveté*

There are several references in Barefoot to Zion to Church members' gullible nature. In my view, these references perpetuate a stereotype that is not accurate. It is true that the more naive members of our Church are easy marks for fraud artists, as are the more naive members of most communities. This is

particularly the case in communities, such as many in Utah, that are insulated to a significant extent from the seedier side of life, and therefore are not practised in dealing with it. However, it is my experience that members of the Church are no more naïve than would be the average person of similar socio-economic status in a similar community.

*Slavery*

The early Church in general, and Joseph Smith in particular, had an enlightened attitude toward slavery. This attitude is evidenced by the manner in which Elizabeth Prescott treats Martha, a runaway slave. At a time when African Americans were considered in many parts of North American society to be a sub-human species, Joseph Smith and other early Church leaders indicated that African Americans had the same potential to become like God that every other human being had, and that slavery was repugnant to our Heavenly Father.

*Baptism*

Baptism is a central part of the Church’s doctrine, as it is with most Christian faiths. Our baptism is by immersion, which we believe to be consistent with the example Jesus set for us in the New Testament. Baptism does not ensure salvation. Rather, it is the opening of a door and beginning of a process that will lead us to become like our Heavenly Father if we follow it through to its conclusion.

**Conclusion**

I hope this summary will help bring Barefoot to Zion to life for those non-members of the Church who have the chance to see it, and that they will come away from that experience with a greater understanding of what makes members of the Church tick, both during pioneer times and today.

**Lexicon**

Apostle	Twelve men who have special authority to act in Christ’s name. There have been twelve apostles with the same authority as the apostles in Christ’s day on the earth from the time of Joseph Smith to present.
Brigham Young	Second prophet of the Church, and successor to Joseph Smith. He led the Church across the plains to Utah, and established Zion there.
Brother or Sister	Adult members of the Church refer to each other as “Brother” and “Sister”. This is the result of the biblical teaching that we are all members of one family, and therefore are brothers and sisters.
The Church	The habit members of the Church have of referring to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- day Saints as "The Church" is often amusing and sometimes irritating to non-members of the Church. This habit probably originated as a simple shorthand reference to the only church in the community. That is, there was no need to distinguish between the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, etc., and “The Church” if “The Church” was the only church in town. For decades, this was the case in most parts of Utah and in many other pioneer communities established by the Church. In any event, the term is constantly used by members of the Church, and is not intended to irritate or offend anyone.
Gathering to Zion	See page 5 above.
Gentile	A term used by members of the Jewish race to refer to non-Jews. Members of the Church consider themselves to be of the House of Israel, as are the Jews, and therefore sometimes use the term "Gentile" to refer to a non-member of the Church.
Joseph Smith	See page 2 above.

Laban	Laban was one of the characters described in the beginning of the Book of Mormon. He was a wicked leader of part of the people living in Jerusalem around 600 B.C. Nephi and his family had been told by Heavenly Father that they should flee Jerusalem because of its impending destruction by the Babylonians, and to build boats that would take them to a land where they would be free. That land was America. In order to follow our Heavenly Father's commandments, Nephi and his brothers needed to obtain certain historical records, including parts of the Old Testament, from Laban in order that their family would not lose touch with its traditions upon arriving in the Americas. Laban was unwilling to give up those records. He tried to both rob and kill Nephi and his brothers. Nephi eventually obtained Laban's sword, and killed Laban with it before obtaining the records and leaving for the Americas. Reference to the sword of Laban is included in one of the play's songs.
The Lord	A shorthand reference to Jesus Christ.
Moroni	Mormon's son, who added the concluding words to the Book of Mormon and then hid it in the hill Cumorah in New York State. Moroni, as a resurrected being or angel, appeared to Joseph Smith and educated him with regard to many things, including the Book of Mormon. Over a course of four years, Moroni occasionally showed the golden plates on which the Book of Mormon was written to Joseph, and eventually entrusted them into his custody. Joseph Smith then translated the Book of Mormon and had it published.
Mormon	A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The name is derived from Mormon, a prophet of the Lord who lived approximately 400 years AD in the Americas. He was also an historian, and abridged a large volume of records into a book that describes the affairs of a Christian people who lived in the Americas from approximately 600 BC to 400 AD. As a result of his role as its abridger, that book is known as the Book of Mormon. It is another testament to the divinity of Jesus Christ, and stands along side the Bible in that regard. Because of the unusual nature of the Book of Mormon in the Christian world, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has come to be known by the nickname the "Mormon Church" and its members are often referred to as "Mormons". Members of the Church regularly use those terms themselves. They are not considered to be derogatory in any way. However, the Church has recently decided to make an effort to reduce prominence of the nickname "Mormon". This is largely due to the fact that the Church now has many members in parts of the world where Christianity is a minor religion, and where reference to the "Mormon" church is likely to create the impression that we worship Mormon. That is of course not the case. We worship only the Saviour and our Heavenly Father. To avoid this type of confusion in places where the Church's beliefs are poorly understood, the Church feels a need to avoid the use of terms like "the Mormon Church" and "Mormons" and to use instead the Church's official name, which makes it clear that we worship and follow Jesus Christ.
Multiply and replenish the earth	This biblical phrase refers to having children.
Nephi	Nephi was a prominent early character in the Book of Mormon, starting his life in Jerusalem near the year 600 BC. Nephi with his family eventually emigrated from Jerusalem to the Americas by way of sea voyage, and established a Christian community in the Americas.
Peter, James and John	The Saviour's three principal apostles.

Prophet	Joseph Smith was the first prophet of this modern age. We believe that a prophet holds all of the authority of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ to conduct the affairs of their church on the earth. When Jesus was crucified, Peter assumed His position of authority as the first prophet of that age. Joseph Smith was the first prophet of this age. Upon his murder, Brigham Young assumed that position. From then until now, there has always been a prophet on the earth.
Saints	Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day <b>Saints</b> . Members of Christ's church while he was on the earth and after his death also referred to themselves as saints.
Spirit	The Holy Ghost, the third member of the Godhead, and the messenger who carries our Heavenly Father's influence to us.
Valley of the Great Salt Lake	The Utah valley in which the Great Salt Lake is located.
Zion	See page 5 above.