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Contents

Publication Details

Editorial

Patriotism and Resistance, Brotherhood and Bombs: The Experience of  
the German Saints and World War II

Steve Carter ..... 6

Origins and Development of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day  
Saints in Historic County Durham, 1843–1913

Ronald L. Bartholomew ..... 29

The Species Debate: God and Humanity in Irenaeus and the Latter-day  
Saints

Adam J. Powell ..... 64

“Those Who Receive You Not”: The Rite of Wiping Dust Off the Feet

Daniel L. Belnap ..... 81

The Holy Ghost in LDS Ritual Experience: Preparation for Exaltation

James D. Holt ..... 128

Embodiment in Mormon Thought: Ambiguity, Contradiction and  
Consensus

Aaron S. Reeves ..... 139

Review – Mormon Convert, Mormon Defector: A Scottish Immigrant in the American West, 1848–1861 Reviewed by David M. Morris.....	165
Review – The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War Reviewed by Carter Charles .....	170
Review – Why I Stay: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Mormons Reviewed by Polly Aird.....	178
Review – Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958 Reviewed by Gina Colvin.....	183
Review – Flunking Sainthood Reviewed by Samuel M. Brown.....	186
Review – The Development of LDS Temple Worship Reviewed by Mauro Properzi.....	188
Review – The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Post-bellum South Reviewed by Jordan T. Watkins.....	193
Article Contributors	

## EDITORIAL

*David M. Morris*

*Editor*

In a year that some have described as the *Mormon Moment*, due to the media exposure of a Mormon standing for the US presidency, Mormon Studies once again enlarges the academic world. One need only look at current releases of university presses, which demonstrate this interest, many of which are reviewed here. In this issue articles are featured on intellectual and historical foci, as well as theological analysis.

We, as always, extend our appreciation to those who took time to blind peer-review articles and review books fairly and formative as possible. As an editorial board we hope you will enjoy the contents of this issue.

If you wish to make a comment or suggestions on its improvement, please feel free to email us at [editorial@ijmsonline.org](mailto:editorial@ijmsonline.org).

## “THOSE WHO RECEIVE YOU NOT”: THE RITE OF WIPING DUST OFF THE FEET

*Daniel L. Belnap*

Many ritual behaviours, particularly the formal institutional rituals more commonly known as the ordinances of the gospel, have textual counterparts in the scriptures that provide meaning for the acts. This may lead one to assume that ritual continuity—when a ritual retains both meaning and form from one time or place to another—exists across the dispensations, yet just because the ritual behaviour in one dispensation is similar to the ritual behaviour of another does not necessarily mean continuity exists. While some of rituals may retain the same basic structure from dispensation to dispensation, ritual innovation often occurs either because the ritual’s role with the gospel has changed, or more commonly because the symbolic landscape established by the culture in which the ritual interacts has changed.

The extent to which such change takes place differs from ritual to ritual. Sacrifice, for instance, is radically different in terms of practice today than that performed in the Old Testament, whereas the sacrament exhibits minimal change; still it would be inaccurate to say that the sacrament has gone unchanged.<sup>1</sup> To assume continuity is understandable, as it provides a means by which an affinity between the modern dispensation and older ones is established. But this does not mean that recognizing potential discontinuity between our ritual practice and those who have gone before does not need to be a negative experience; instead it can be one, which edifies our appreciation and understanding of the ritual.

The following study explores the value of recognizing continuity and discontinuity in ritual by examining the rite of wiping the dust off one’s feet. Originally attested in Christ’s instructions to his disciples concerning their missionary labours, the rite was restored in the early part of this dispensation as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants. As we shall see, though similarities in both meaning and form exist in

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<sup>1</sup> See Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 3 Nephi 18:5-12, 28-31; 3 Nephi 20:1-9; Moroni 4-5; Doctrine and Covenants 20:75-79.

the ancient and modern ritual practices, discontinuity may best explain the ambivalence with which the rite of the wiping the dust off one's feet is understood by the average Latter-day Saint.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS

Found in the synoptic Gospels, the texts describing the purpose and manner of the rite of shaking or wiping the dust off one's feet are part of Christ's instructions to his disciples concerning their missionary labours. The first of these textual versions in order of canonical appearance is Matthew's:<sup>2</sup>

And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

And when ye come into an house, salute it.

And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. (Matthew 10:11-15)

Mark's version of this instruction is similar, though abbreviated and missing any mention of a blessing based on the worthiness of the inhabitants:

And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Mark 6:10-11).

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<sup>2</sup> All scriptural quotes are taken from the KJV.

Finally, Luke also includes this instruction, though considerably pared down:

And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them (Luke 9:4-5).

Yet this pared-down version is then followed by an extensive set of instruction to the newly called Seventy in chapter 10:

And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. (Luke 10:5-12)

Predominant among all of the above ritual texts is the motive as to why the disciples would dust their feet—the lack of reception experienced by the disciples in their various ministerial locations.



Though the reason for the rite is clear within the texts, there has been no consensus among New Testament scholars as to the origin of the rite. Many associate this rite with rabbinic references that mention the need to be cleansed from contamination acquired while on Gentile territory.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the lack of reception is equated with uncleanness, and therefore the rite is a cleansing rite similar to the rabbinic one. Such an interpretation, while understandable, neglects other elements within these texts that suggest another origin, namely rites associated with hospitality.

*Hospitality in the Old Testament.* Hospitality has long been recognized as an important part of ancient Mediterranean culture<sup>4</sup> and was

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<sup>3</sup> The number of New Testament commentaries that refer back to the Jewish explanation are too many to number here though this explanation can be found in commentaries a hundred years old to those that have been published within the past ten years. For a partial list see T.J. Rogers, "Shaking the Dust off the Markan Mission Discourse," in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27, no. 2 (2004): 169–192, particularly 180f. Some LDS commentaries have included this explanation in their own explanations, for instance see Hoyt W. Brewster, *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 513: "Ancient missionaries shook the dust from their feet against those who rejected the gospel, for they 'were to be considered as pagans with whom the Jews held no social intercourse. Even the dust of their dwellings and their cities, was to be treated as defilement, necessitating a cleansing.'" Brewster is quoting directly from Hyrum M. Smith's and Janne M. Sjodahl's earlier commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants. *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1923), 126).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom: Abraham and Lot in Genesis 18 and 19*, Biblical Interpretation Series 10 (Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995), 155: "In nomadic societies of the ancient Middle East hospitality to a stranger was a sacred obligation, a manifestation of social graciousness that touches the deepest values . . . The guest is sacred and it is an honour to provide for him . . . Jewish theology developed the consciousness of hospitality providing the possibility of expiating sins (Barakhot 55a; Sanhedrin 103), a notion that Jesus himself touches on in the house of Simon." For more on ancient Near Eastern hospitality see, Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005); Jean-Jacques Glassner, "L'hospitalité en Mésopotamie ancienne: aspect de la question de l'étranger," in *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archologie* 80, no. 1 (1990): 60–75; Michael Herzfeld, "'As in Your Own House': Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society," in *Honour and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed.

the primary means by which the unknown and therefore dangerous outsider could be assimilated and rendered harmless.<sup>5</sup> In this process, the host and guest each had definable, if not always explicit, responsibilities to ensure that a productive social relationship was established.<sup>6</sup> Displayed in a number of ways (offering of meals, rest, and so forth), one of the rites associated with hospitality was the washing of the guest’s feet.<sup>7</sup> The rite can be found throughout the Old Testament, one

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David D. Gilmore (Washington D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 75–89; T.R. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament and the ‘Teleological Fallacy,’” in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 95, no. ??? (2001): 3–30; Scott Morschauer, “‘Hospitality,’ Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1–9,” in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27, no. 4 (2003): 461–85; Robert C. Stallman, *Divine Hospitality in the Pentateuch: A Metaphorical Perspective on God as Host*, Ph.D. diss. for Westminster Theological Seminary, 1999, unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> Ancient hospitality from an ancient Near Eastern perspective differs from our modern understanding of hospitality. While we tend to associate hospitality with service, or selfless acts by one party, rendered because of the individual’s moral or ethical stance, ancient hospitality required reciprocity between the two parties to transform the unknown and therefore dangerous into a recognizable and therefore controllable state. In other words, hospitality was not expected to be a selfless act on the part of the host, but a ritualized process by which the guest is introduced into the family structure and rendered harmless, subjugated to the authority of the host (for a greater critique of this principle see Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 1–4; see also T. R. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament”).

<sup>6</sup> T. R. Hobbs, “Hospitality in the First Testament,” 11: “As a guest, a stranger is in a liminal phase, and may infringe upon the guest/host relationship: by insulting the host through hostility or rivalry; by usurping the role of the host; by refusing what is offered. On the other hand, the host may infringe: by insulting the guest through hostility or rivalry; by neglecting to protect the guest and his/her honour; by failing to attend to one’s guests, to grant precedence, to show concern.” It should be pointed out that hospitality also played an important role in the Book of Mormon to facilitate movement from stranger to household member. In Alma 8, for instance, the hospitality displayed by Amulek as he “receives” Alma leads Alma to bless Amulek and his entire household and then remain in the household for days. This hospitality is later reciprocated when following their missionary labours in Ammonihah Alma takes Amulek into his own house (Alma 8:19–22; Alma 15:16–18).

<sup>7</sup> Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel: 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 85: “In the world of the Bible, people would bathe their entire body, as well as simply

of the more well-known occurrences being Abraham's provisions of such for his unnamed guests as recorded in Genesis 18:4: "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." While it is unclear whether Abraham or one of his servants did the washing, the verse suggests that it was the host's responsibility to provide both the space and means to wash the feet. A generation later, Abraham's servant is shown similar hospitality in Laban's household, including water to wash both his and his men's feet (see Genesis 24:32). In 1 Samuel, following the death of Nabal and David's request for Abigail's hand in marriage, Abigail offers to wash the feet of David's messengers upon their arrival (see 1 Samuel 25:41).

The Old Testament also contains examples of inhospitable behaviour. For instance, Abigail's hospitality contrasts, even reverses, the inhospitality proffered by her husband Nabal (see 1 Samuel 25:36-38). The book of Judges is replete with inhospitable acts from Jael's slaughter of Sisera (see 4:18-22), to Manoah's inability to recognize the value of his guest (see 13:8-23), to the cruel treatment inflicted upon the unnamed Levitical woman (see 19:14-30). Though only one of these examples mentions the washing of the guest's feet, the worsening inhospitality depicted within the book suggests that Israel's inhospitality is equated with its spiritual state.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most infamous example

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wash their face, hands or feet. To some extent bathing and washing were understood as part of personal hygiene. Feet get dusty, so it was customary to provide water for guests to wash their own feet. But to a greater extent bathing and washing signified a change in social status. Hosts washed the feet of strangers to signify that they were now completely in the care and under the protection of their household."

<sup>8</sup> Jo Ann Hackett, "Violence and Women's Lives in the Book of Judges," *Interpretation* 58, no. 4 (2004): 356-64, 64: "The complex interweaving of these stories throughout the book of Judges argues for an underlying system of meaning that sees in women's bodies a substitute for a unified Israel." See also Athalya Brenner, "Introduction," in *Judges, A Feminist Companion to the Bible 4* (2nd Series), ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 13: "Violence against women is routinely considered or committed, probably as an extended hyperbole symbolic of the disintegrating social order." Many have noted the mistreatment as an essential part of the literary structure of the book, used to demonstrate the increasing depravity and lack of community experienced by Israel. See also Don Michael Hudson, "Living in a Land of Epithets: Anonymity in Judges 19-21," in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 62 (1994): 49-66, who explores the growing anonymity of the characters,

of inhospitality and its negative consequences is the narrative in Genesis 19 of Lot, his guests, and his fellow townspeople. In this instance, Lot shows proper hospitality by providing water for the washing of feet, but the town asks for the guests to be delivered to them without promising the guests safety. As we shall see, this account plays an important role in the New Testament instructions.

### HOSPITALITY, CHRIST’S TEACHINGS, AND DISCIPLESHIP

In the New Testament, rites of hospitality are often expressed in the teachings of Christ. Matthew 25 suggests that hospitality defined the true disciple of Christ: “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory . . . then he shall sit. . . . Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father. . . . For I was hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me” (Matthew 25:31-36).

The reader is told that though the true disciple may not have done these things to Christ directly, doing them for others is the same as doing them unto Christ: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (v. 40). Thus, via substitution, hospitality lies at the heart of the disciple’s relationship with Christ.<sup>9</sup> As for those who do not demonstrate hospitality, Christ

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specifically women, as the book progresses. As a literary technique used to further suggest Israel’s disintegration as a society, “Anonymity gives the implicit impression that every individual within Israel was dangerous because every individual was doing right in his or her own eyes . . . by viewing the anonymity of the concubine the reader gets the impression that ‘every’ concubine from Dan to Beersheba could be raped, murdered and dismembered . . . the anonymity of the characters assumes and characterizes the universality of the wickedness of the abusers and the dismemberment of the victims in that society. Anonymity disintegrates individuality to depict universal dismemberment. . . . from the independent, powerful women in the beginning of the book (Ach-sah, Deborah) who participated in the division of the land and the protection of the tribes, the narrative has spiralled down to portray nameless women who are divided by the tribes” (60-1). See also Daniel I. Block, “Unspeakable Crimes: The Abuse of Women in the Book of Judges,” in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (1998): 46-55.

<sup>9</sup> The relationship between substitution and hospitality is also found in 2 Samuel 10, with the death of the Ammonite king, in which David sends two

declares, “Depart from me, ye cursed. . . . For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink” (v. 41). The concept of reciprocity used here to describe the consequences of hospitable vs. inhospitable behaviour reflect the real-life effects of hospitality where reciprocity is the foundation of the guest-host relationship.<sup>10</sup>

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servants as a sign of respect to the newly appointed king, Hanun. Upon their arrival, the counselors of the new king recommend ritually humiliating the messengers, which they do by shaving off half of their beards and cutting their clothing down to the waist and sending them away. David, upon hearing of humiliating inhospitality displayed, promptly gathers his army and marches to war soundly defeating the inhospitable Ammonites. In this case, the messengers are not individuals acting of their own accord but represent the one who sent them, and any action taken against them or on their behalf symbolically reflects on the sender, thus inhospitality against them is inhospitality against David. John T. Greene, *The Role of Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East: Oral and Written Communication in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Scriptures: Communications and Communiqués in Context*, Brown Judaic Studies 169 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 42: “messengers are ‘extensions’ of one’s power and will.” See also Susan Niditch, *“My Brother Esau is a Hairy Man”: Hair and Identity in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 98: “The action of the Ammonites incenses King David, for the emissaries are an extension of his person and his power, and he goes to war and roundly defeats the Ammonites.”

<sup>10</sup> Because of the social nature of ritual, reciprocity often plays an important role in ritual behaviour. Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, revised ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 100–101: “Perhaps the most significant form of social interaction in the limited-good world of the first century is an informal principle of reciprocity, a sort of implicit, non-legal contractual obligation, unenforceable by any authority apart from one’s sense of honour and shame . . . for example, the acceptance of an invitation to supper, of a small gift, or a benefaction like healing was equivalent to a positive challenge requiring a response. It signalled the start of an ongoing reciprocal relationship. To accept an invitation, a gift, or a benefaction with no thought to future reciprocity implies acceptance of imbalance in society.” For more on the importance of reciprocity in the social kinship structure of Hellenistic Palestine see Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), and Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 17–20. In LDS ritual behaviour this can be seen for instance in rituals, both formal and informal. An example of formal reciprocity are those rituals associated with the temple; for an informal ritual tradition, the shaking of all the individuals’ hands after having been confirmed, ordained, or set apart.

The sermon ends with reference to the extended hospitality to be offered to the righteous and the inhospitality that will be experienced by the wicked: “And these [the wicked] shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46). The preposition *into* (Greek preposition *eis*) suggests that *life eternal* is being used here not to describe a state of being, but a place, thus the righteous are invited into God’s home by the gracious hospitality of God. The wicked, on the other hand, are to go away to another place, their inhospitality reflected in God’s eschatological inhospitality.<sup>11</sup>

The hospitality rite of washing of feet played its greatest role in Christ’s final series of teachings and reinforced the theme of divine hospitality found throughout. Immediately following the Last Supper, as recorded in John 13, Christ proceeds to wash the feet of his disciples. Upon reaching Peter, the Apostle challenges Christ’s actions, first by expressing that he never wants Christ to wash and wipe his feet (see John 13:8). Importantly, Peter is not saying that he does not need his feet washed, only that he desires that Christ not be the one to do it. While the washing of feet is a sign of hospitality, in the Old Testament the guests themselves or perhaps the servants of the host wash the feet, not the hosts. In this light, it is more likely that Peter feels that Christ may be shaming himself by doing the act himself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Hospitality may lie at the core of other principles in Christ’s teachings. For example, in Matthew 7, the sequence of ask, seek, and knock ends with the promise that the one who knocks shall be answered, or in other words, received into the house. This perspective is further elucidated when the imagery of knocking is applied to Christ as the stranger as in Revelations 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” In this reference the hospitality foundation is clear. Receiving Christ is actually inviting him into the home and providing a meal for him.

<sup>12</sup> The role of honour will not be discussed in any great detail here in this paper, but honour and shame are integral to the importance of hospitality. See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: insights from cultural anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 27–51. See also Herzfeld, “As in Your Own House,” mentioned earlier. Herzfeld’s piece is part of a larger collection of studies all concerning honour and shame in the Mediterranean culture.

Christ's response is that if the rite is not performed then Peter can have no part with him (see John 13:8).<sup>13</sup> Peter then exclaims that if this is the case, then Christ should wash not only his feet, but his hands and head as well (see John 13:9), the assumption being that if the washing of feet allows one to have "part" with Christ, then the washing of everything demonstrates Peter's full commitment.<sup>14</sup> Christ then tells Peter that if he had been washed in that manner then the purpose would have been to become clean, but purity was not the intent of this rite (see John 13:10). In fact, according to the Saviour, the majority of the disciples were already clean. Moreover, the text implies that he washes the feet of Judas who the author says is the one who is unclean. Thus the purpose of the rite is not solely to clean, and apparently not to purify, but it is associated with "having part with him."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The term here for "part" (*mēros*) can mean both a designated geographical area as well as a particular set of circumstances that defines a person at any one given time and as such is used at least once to refer to the place and state one experiences following judgment. See also Matthew 24:51; Luke 12:46, which translate *meros* as "portion."

<sup>14</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, "The Johannine Footwashing (13.1–11) as Symbol of Eschatological Hospitality," in *New Testament Studies* 28, no. 4 (1982): 539–546, 542–43: "It is clear that in the present text of the Fourth Gospel the footwashing has a soteriological significance (13.8b), and that being 'clean' (13.10–11) is a prerequisite for salvation. But it would be incorrect to conclude that the footwashing represents a form of cultic washing or purification." Christ himself suggests that the rite is not to be viewed as a rite of purity.

<sup>15</sup> The Joseph Smith translation includes the following conclusion to the verse: "Now this was the custom of the Jews under their law; wherefore, Jesus did this that the law might be fulfilled." This addition suggests that what Christ was doing was not unique but commonly recognized as part of the Law of Moses. Unfortunately, it is unclear which specific instruction found in the Law of Moses is being referenced or even which washing the commentary refers to (is it the washing of feet Christ is performing or the washing of hands and feet?). In Exodus 30:19–21, we are told that Aaron and his sons, as priests, are to wash hands and feet prior to service in the tabernacle so that they do not die. Yet other than this injunction to the priests, no mention is made of Israelites being required to wash feet outside of the norms of hospitality. In light of this, it is possible that the priestly injunction may also be referencing hospitality rites. The laver is consecrated unto God, even anointed by God's representative, and thus may represent the water the host provides for his guests.

Following the washing and wiping, Christ sits down again and asks, “Know ye what I have done to you?” (John 13:12). He then proceeds to answer providing the disciples with an understanding of the proper relationship between the master and the servant—the one sent and the sender. He does this by first acknowledging his role as master, declaring the correctness of calling him as such, and then stating that if he as Master washes their feet, then they should do likewise to each other. The reasoning is based on the fact that the “servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him” (v. 16). But this in turn reveals Christ’s role as the Father’s servant, thus he is not, ultimately, the host, but is instead the servant, at least in terms of hospitality, washing the feet of his Master’s guests.

Using language similar to that found in the foot-dusting texts, Christ then teaches that whoever received the disciples received him. Though “receiving” is often understood to refer to the host’s responsibilities, it may also refer to the responsibilities of the guest as he or she is to “receive” the host’s hospitality. In this particular instance, the disciples are designated as guests, thus this hospitality rite acts as a sign of their “receiving” Christ. Yet, in his explanation, Christ also reinforces the substitution of disciple for Christ that we have seen earlier: “He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me” (v. 20), which relies on the “receiving” responsibilities of the host. In other words, Christ also speaks to the disciples who will go out and seek to be received by others.

This back and forth of hospitality responsibilities is given one last twist as Christ then establishes: “he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (v. 20). The anonymity of the one doing the “receiving” can now speak to both the missionary experience, as the disciple will represent Christ, and to the immediate situation of the Last Supper, in which Christ represents the Father.<sup>16</sup> Thus the rite becomes the means

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<sup>16</sup> This may have had some impact on the later Greco-Roman convert who would have known the classic Greek narratives of gods visiting unawares. That these traditions were still known and believed is witnessed in Acts 14, where the city of Lycaonia mistook Barnabus and Paul to be Jupiter and Mercury (Zeus and Hermes), two Greek deities who were often found in disguise bestowing blessings on the hospitable and leaving curses behind on the inhospitable. For more see Adelbert Denaux, “The Theme of Divine Visits and Human (In)hospitality in Luke-Acts: Its Old Testament and Greco-Roman



to symbolize the role of hospitality in Christ's teachings concerning the Father and his kingdom, as well as the means to demonstrate one's "receiving" of Christ. The rite is then followed by an extended sermon in which Christ repeatedly speaks of the Father's kingdom and of his going to prepare God's abode for the guests. In John 14, for instance, Christ's promises that he was going to go before the disciples to prepare a place and "receive [them] unto [himself]; that where [he is], there [they] may be also." In fact, as one reviews John 13-17, hospitality and the attendant roles of guest, host, and servant act as a foundation to the entire discourse.<sup>17</sup>

*Inhospitality and wiping dust off one's feet.* In many ways, the rite of wiping dust off feet may be thought of as the reverse of the footwashing rite, utilizing the social institution of hospitality to provide the meaning behind the act.<sup>18</sup> At the heart of the rite is whether or not the missionaries are received (*dexomai*) by the household, village, or city to

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Antecedents," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 255-279.

<sup>17</sup> Even the commandment to love one another may reflect hospitality responsibilities. In Deuteronomy 10:18-19, Moses describes God as one who: "loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment." This image of God as the hospitable host here is the reason behind the commandment to Israel to love the stranger: "Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Back in John 13:34, the commandment to love one another is followed by Christ using himself as a template to demonstrate that love—"as I have loved you." If one equates demonstrating love through hospitality, as God himself does in Deuteronomy 10, then it is possible that the "as I have loved you" refers to the act of the feet washing, a rite that connotes acceptance and place within the household. In both cases, it is about accepting the other, the stranger, a lesson that the disciples will need to have learned and internalized approximately fifty days later.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Skinner, *Gethsemane* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 41: "Jesus instituted the ordinance of the washing of the feet as 'a holy and sacred rite, one performed by the saints in the seclusion of their temple sanctuaries,' according to Elder Bruce R. McConkie (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:708). It appears to be an ordinance of ultimate approbation by the Lord and, in a fascinating way, stands in direct contrast to the ordinance of wiping dust off the feet, which seems to be the ultimate earthly ordinance of condemnation by the Lord, performed only by his authorized servants."

which they are ministering.<sup>19</sup> Though the Greek term *dexomai* means in the most general sense “to receive” it was one of a constellation of terms used to describe Greco-Roman hospitality responsibilities, specifically the general responsibilities of the host “to receive” the guest, thereby taking care of their needs and providing them shelter. If the guest was sent by another and was therefore an emissary or ambassador, then reception could also include the message as well as the general needs.<sup>20</sup>

The instructions concerning the rite of wiping dust off the feet are part of a longer series of instructions concerning the hospitality offered to the disciple-missionary. Hospitality was to play a fundamental role in the missionary effort, as is witnessed by Christ’s instructions that the missionary was to travel without money, extra clothes, and particularly provisions. Thus the missionary was entirely dependent upon the hospitality of strangers for sustenance. These injunctions were then followed by the responsibilities the missionary had as guest within the home. Both the Mark 6:8-11 and the Luke 9:3-5 instructions state that the disciple was to stay in the individual household that took them in until they left the place, and the Luke 10:2-11 instructions state explicitly that the missionary was to remain in the house, eating and drinking what was placed before them.

It is within this larger context of hospitality we are told that if the disciples were not received then the rite would be performed. While Matthew’s version states that the rite can be performed against an individual house as well as the city (see Matthew 10:14), both Mark’s and both of Luke’s versions only mention performing the rite against the city in which the missionaries were not received. Unfortunately, even with the larger context of hospitality, it is unclear whether the rite was

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<sup>19</sup> This Greek term is used throughout the Greco-Roman era and is recognized as one of the primary words used to describe hospitality, specifically the act of welcoming the guest into the home. See Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 54, 93, 130-131, 188. See also Denaux, “The Theme,” 257: “According to Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (*Greek-English Lexicon of the Greek New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, New York, 1988) the notions of ‘visit’, ‘welcome, receive’, and ‘show hospitality’, belong to the semantic domain of ‘Association’ . . . the notion of ‘welcome, receive’ can be expressed by . . . *dexomai*.”

<sup>20</sup> The term is used throughout the letters of Paul and of the other apostles to describe their physical reception by the church communities as well as reception of the message (see Acts 2:17; 2 Corinthians 7:15; 11:4; Galatians 4:14; Philippians 4:18; Colossians 4:10; Hebrews 11:31; and 3 John 1:9-10).

given in response to a lack of physical hospitality, or to non-reception of the message. Matthew's and Mark's versions state that "whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words" shall be the recipient of the rite (Matthew 10:14; see Mark 6:11).<sup>21</sup> Whether hearing meant accepting and therefore receiving cannot be ascertained. Luke 9 merely mentions "whosoever will not receive you" will experience the rite, while Luke 10 states that rite is to be performed with the warning that the Kingdom of God was near, suggesting that the inhabitants had also forfeited their right to be a part of the kingdom when they refused to offer hospitality to the missionaries (Luke 9:5; see Luke 10:11).

In terms of the rite itself we know that it involves the removal of accumulated dirt from the feet, though it is not clear what exactly that entails. Three of the four Gospel texts use a form of the verb *tinassō*, which means to shake or brush. Matthew's account simply instructs the missionary to "shake off the dust of your feet" (Matthew 10:14). Similarly, the Luke 9 account mentions that it is the "very" dirt of the feet that is to be brushed off (v. 5). Mark's version recounts that it is the dirt on the soles of the feet that is to be brushed off (see Mark 6:11).

Unlike the above three references, the final one in Luke 10:10-11 describes the rite in a verbal declaration that the disciples are to say when they experience inhospitality: "But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the king-

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<sup>21</sup>Speaking particularly of this ambiguity as found in Mark's text, T. J. Rogers states: "Some scholars have chosen to favour one part over the other...This bias toward one to the exclusion of the other is as unnecessary as it is undesirable. In all likelihood, these are not two separate types of rejection, but one and the same. For the evangelist there is no significant difference between refusing to offer hospitality and refusing to hear the gospel of Christ. But this functional similarity should not obscure the rhetorical distinction that accounts for the inclusion of the two parts. The rejection of hospitality is the focus, since it is mentioned prior to the reference to the refusal to hear the message. Also, the greater context of the passage, particularly the immediately preceding verse (6.10), which discusses hospitality explicitly, suggests where the evangelist's main concern lies" ("Shaking the Dust," 179). Unfortunately, he does not address the even more ambiguous texts of Luke, which say nothing of hearing the word at all.

dom of God is come nigh unto you.” Here, the verb used to describe the rite is *apomassō*, which means to wipe off, but no mention is made of specifically of the feet, though the similarities between the rest of the Luke 10 text and the others seem clear. Assuming that Luke 10 understands that it is the feet that are wiped off, the rite, as described in the four gospel texts, appears to consist of removing the shoe and wiping or brushing the dirt from the feet, most probably the sole. In this, the rite functions like the hospitality rite of feet washing, as both are performed to remove the dirt that one acquired by travelling. Yet whereas the latter is offered by a gracious host to welcome one into the home (the receiving of the guest), the former is performed when one is openly rejected and the expected hospitality not offered.<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, none of the texts concerning the rite of wiping dust off one’s feet mention water, which may emphasize the rite as a response to inhospitality. Because they were not received, they were not offered water for their feet and thus the traveller is forced to clean their own feet without water. In this light, the positive reciprocity that one would expect from normal hospitality, including a blessing pronounced on the house by the guest, is inverted by performing the act outside of the proper setting of the home; thus negative reciprocity results as the inhospitality is returned in the form of a curse, by a rite that should have led to a blessing, but which now leads to condemnation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rogers, “Shaking the Dust,” 182, again using the Markan text states: “the dust-shaking serves as a testimony, as evidence that hospitality had not been offered. Had the twelve entered the town and been extended hospitality, as v. 10 [Mark 6:10] directs, they would have been admitted into a house and their feet would have been washed according to custom. Thus, they would have been without dust on their feet to shake. However, any town not offering hospitality would likewise not wash the feet of the apostles. Accordingly, upon leaving, their feet would remain soiled from the dust of the road, which, when shaken off, serves as evidence that hospitality was not offered. Thematically, this solution fits the best of any hitherto proposed. The preceding context sets up the mission as one that requires hospitality as a factor for success (vv. 8-9), and then explicitly presents this arrangement in the imperative (v.10). Following this, the protasis of v. 11 introduces a condition where the twelve are refused hospitality. In natural thematic sequence, the apodosis too should pertain to matters of hospitality, specifically the consequence of refusing to offer it.”

<sup>23</sup> The same pattern can be seen in the ritual of the Latter-day Saint sacrament, which may also be seen through the lens of hospitality. In 1 Corinthians 11:29,

That the rite may be associated with inhospitality is also reflected in the association of the city or household against which the rite is performed with Sodom and Gomorrah. Alluded to as the paradigmatical example of divine retribution, the destruction of these two cities was explained in later literature as the result of their hostility instead of hospitality towards Lot's guests.<sup>24</sup>

While the apparent focus of the Sodom and Gomorrah account is the perverse sexuality threatened by the townspeople, the sexual violence may be understood as the manner by which the inhospitality took expression.<sup>25</sup> Thus, by associating the town or household that

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Paul states that one who "eateth and drinketh unworthily" will "eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Similarly, when instituting the sacrament in the New World, Christ himself warns of partaking of the sacrament unworthily: "And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul" (3 Nephi 18:28-29). The angel who spoke to King Benjamin associated drinking damnation with partaking of the cup of the wrath of God, thus the sacrament is either a rite in which one may attain a spiritual state in which the Spirit is always present or one in which the drink becomes the cup of God's wrath.

<sup>24</sup> See Ezekiel 16:49. See also Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 231 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 158: "From the evaluation of Sodom as the prototype of divine judgment it follows that the actions of the Sodomites are archetypical instances of wickedness, especially with reference to (a) overbearing arrogance, inhospitality, and lack of compassion for the socially weak and disadvantaged."

<sup>25</sup> Robert Ignatius Letellier, *Day in Mamre*, 158: "The violation of social norms in the attack on Lot's house and the integrity of his guests (with the intended sexual violation of course inflaming the situation) is already a radical disruption of order in the social fabric. . . . The nature and limits of the rights of sojourners in the ancient Orient are still not well understood, but H. Brunner has pointed out by reference to Ch. 22 of the Insinger Papyrus of the Ptolemaic period that these rights in Egypt could be frighteningly fragile. A sojourner could expect to be roughly received by the local populace, could be cursed, and rejected, even subjected to the 'crime of women' (Egypp. *btw n shnt*) which means the crime of violating a man as if he was a woman (ie. sodomy) for which no redress was possible." In these circumstances, both the violation and the homosexual nature of the rape become less sexual sins per se as manifesta-

does not “receive” Jesus’ disciples with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rite of wiping dust off feet as a response to inhospitality is further emphasized.

Of course, one of the challenges to these texts is that they do not describe any actual ritual performance. Instead they are what can be called prescriptive texts prescribing what should happen, not necessarily what did happen in reality.<sup>26</sup> Of greater value to understanding how ritual affected the given society are those ritual texts that can be called descriptive texts because they describe what actually happens in the ritual experience.<sup>27</sup> Acts 13:50–51 is the only descriptive text that we

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tions of social violence and hatred in which a helpless traveller is brutalized by a local community in a gratuitous act of rejection and humiliation.” See also, J. A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities: Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, early Jewish and early Christian Traditions* (Kampen, the Netherlands: J. H. Kok Publishing House, 1990), 37: “The fact that Lot is prepared to surrender his virgin daughters rather than his guests to the lust of the mob suggest that the emphasis is on the social aspect of their sin and not on the sexual aspect itself . . . The Sodomites are engaging in an anti-social act of violence and oppression. It is not for nothing that this is expressed in the motif of perverse sex. This is not only to show that the Sodomites wanted to ‘humiliate’ and ‘demasculinize’ the guests. The Sodomites make natural intercourse impossible by violating the social fibre of the community as represented by the motif of hospitality.” Demasculinization and inhospitality are also related in the narrative concerning David’s envoys to the Ammonites, see Niditch, *My Brother Esau*, 98: “The shaved beard and the ripped robe are potent symbols; the Israelites will not allow themselves to be unmannered or overpowered; that they are mere women is, on the other hand, precisely the message that the ill-fated Ammonites sought to send.”

<sup>26</sup> Prescriptive texts are numerous in the scriptures. Most of the book of Leviticus, for instance, is made up of prescriptive texts. Though highly detailed, Leviticus 1 does not detail how bloody or messy the rite of animal sacrifice is, nor does it detail how long before the items begin to decay, and so forth. Prescriptive texts are difficult to interpret as they more often reflect the ideal of the writers or redactors and not necessarily the manner in which the society in question actually practiced or understood the ritual. For this, descriptive texts are helpful in determining meaning as we see the rituals put into actual, historical practice. An example of the difference between the two types is Leviticus 1–8 (prescriptive) and Leviticus 9 (descriptive).

<sup>27</sup> Ritual can actually be described textually as one of three types: 1) prescriptive, or an idealized description of prescribed ritual behaviour, 2) descriptive, or a description of an actual ritual event, and 3) a fictional passage describing a

have for our rite in the canon. In the passage we are told that Paul and Barnabas are expelled from the city of Antioch in Pisidia by the city leadership whereupon: “they shook off the dust of their feet against them.” Unfortunately, the text is rather sparse, but what we do have suggests that inhospitality is the primary reason for the performance of the rite. Though this is not the only city in which Paul and his companions experienced persecution, it is the only city recorded in Acts to have officially expelled them from its environs. Thus, in Antioch of Pisidia, the two were not received and therefore performed the rite of the wiping dust off the feet.

In summary, shaking or wiping dust off the feet, as recorded in the New Testament, appears to be a rite that fit within a cultural continuum of hospitality and its attendant rites, particularly the washing of feet. It was performed in response to inhospitable behaviour exhibited by the inhabitants of a city or household, described as those who do not “receive” the missionary disciple, which reception may have included at least listening to the message proffered. Because they have not been offered the opportunity to wash their feet as expected, the offended disciples were to respond to this inhospitality by wiping off their own feet without water.<sup>28</sup> The consequences of this act were left unsaid, though the warning that those who had the rite performed against them were to experience a worse judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah

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non-real ritual event. While the third textual type is not often found in the scriptures we will encounter this form later on in the paper.

<sup>28</sup> Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 140, 143: “Inhospitability shown to the traveling apostles appears to represent both a moral lapse as well as a rejection of the message and ministry of Jesus. These apostles are functioning as emissaries of Jesus. They carry out their mission by the authority and power that Jesus grants to them. Thus, when potential hosts reject these men, they are simultaneously rejecting the one who sent them as well as the message they bring. The rejection of Jesus, his apostles, his message, and his ministry, then function as a testimony against these inhospitable people. When Jesus’ apostles experience rejection and inhospitality, they are supposed to wipe the very dust off their feet that should have been washed off if their potential hosts had taken the appropriate actions and made sure the travelers’ feet were washed (9.5). . . . Jesus instructs his disciples to protest a community’s inhospitality in the city streets by wiping the dust from their feet that would have accumulated during their travels. At that point, the dust functions as evidence that the townspeople have not acted properly. If they had properly received Jesus’ disciples, the townspeople would have washed this dust off of their guest’s feet.”

in the Day of Judgment, two cities recognized for their inhospitality, is found in three of the four texts.

### WIPING DUST OFF FEET IN THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Approximately two thousand years later, the rite of dusting off one's feet again appears, this time in the context of latter-day missionary work as found in the Doctrine and Covenants where five prescriptive texts concerning the rite are found. Unlike the New Testament texts, these do not provide different accounts of the same instruction, but instead are given over a two year period five different times. As we shall see, the texts demonstrate an evolving understanding of the rite and its significance.

*Section 24:15.* The first of these texts is in section 24 as part of the instructions given to Oliver Cowdery in July 1830 before he began his missionary work. Following reassurances that miracles similar to those promised to the New Testament missionaries would occur for him as well, Oliver is told: “And in whatsoever place ye shall enter, and they receive you not in my name, ye shall leave a cursing instead of a blessing, by casting off the dust of your feet against them as a testimony, and cleansing your feet by the wayside” (v. 15).

The similarities between this rite and the New Testament version are apparent: both incorporate inhospitality terminology (“receive you not”) and both are performed with the removal of dust from the feet. But there are also intriguing differences. The first is the manner in which the missionary was to be received. None of the New Testament texts speak of reception needing to be in the name of Christ. This distinction might be a reflection of changes to the nature and practice of hospitality as well as the understanding as to what hospitality was. It is safe to say that certain elements of ancient Near Eastern hospitality would no longer be significant in the same manner they would have been in the past; for instance the washing of the guest's feet is not as commonplace in 1830 as it was in biblical times. Moreover, hospitality was now understood to have been one of the primary characteristics of true Christian living.<sup>29</sup> Though this may seem to be no different than

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<sup>29</sup> Christian hospitality is still a subject of interest today. For more on this subject see John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as*



the expectation of hospitality in the ancient world, the near universal recognition of Christianity among the Western world would have implications if one were to ask for reception in the name of Christ.

The reference also establishes the rite as a mechanism to cursing. Though cursing is found throughout the scriptures, it is unclear what exactly cursing entails or what is involved in bringing a curse about. It is often associated with the sealing power, subordinated under the general principle that whatsoever one seals on earth is sealed in heaven.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as one reviews those scriptures that speak of cursing, the principle generally relates to the consequences that result from covenant breaking in which an individual is beset by afflictions or adversities that restrict their general prosperity.<sup>31</sup> Richard Draper has posited that this is ultimately done not through any explicit divine action, but by divine withdrawal from a given society.<sup>32</sup> In other words,

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*Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); Luke Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness: Christian Witness amid Moral Diversity* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006); and Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 132:46–47: “And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever you bind on earth, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven. And again, verily I say, whomsoever you bless I will bless, and whomsoever you curse I will curse, saith the Lord; for I, the Lord, am thy God.”

<sup>31</sup> Another definition is that of Gregory A. Prince, *Power From On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Press, 1995), 107–108: “Not to be confused with profanity, the ordinance of cursing consisted of a formal act with the intent of causing an adverse effect on an individual or group.”

<sup>32</sup> Richard D. Draper, “*Hubris and Ate: A Latter Day Warning From the Book of Mormon*,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 2 (1994): 12–33, 22: “Both the Old and New Testaments testify to the reality and power of God’s curse. Do not be misled into thinking a curse is something that it is not. Too often a cursing is seen as activating some kind of destructive force—some hex, spell, or enchantment which, by virtue of a supernatural nexus of operation, brings harm to its recipient. Nothing could be further from the truth. A “curse” denotes something delivered up to divine wrath and dedicated to de-

God’s curse is ultimately separating himself from interaction with the offender. If such meaning is applied to this rite, the ritual is then one of separation in which the offending lack of hospitality will lead to separation from God.

Finally, the rite now appears to include a second step of “cleansing [one’s] feet by the wayside” after one has already cast off the dust. What “cleansing” means is unclear, though, as we shall see, the other Doctrine and Covenants texts speak of the washing of one’s feet as part of the overall ritual process associated with the wiping the dust off one’s feet. We have already seen that washing is not found in the New Testament texts, perhaps intentionally to highlight the inhospitality of the household or city. While washing would fulfil the purpose of removing the dirt, it also creates ritual ambiguity in that washing often carries the connotation of moral or ethical cleansing, an aspect of the rite that appears to be missing from the New Testament form.

*Section 60:15.* The second reference to dusting off one’s feet was delivered to the elders of the Church a little over a year (August 8, 1831) after the revelation to Oliver Cowdery: “And shake off the dust of thy feet against those who receive thee not, not in their presence, lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the day of judgment.” Like the section 24 text, this also includes allusions to the New Testament texts, including the performance of the rite against those “who receive thee not” and the eschatological consequences that result for those who do not. Yet there is also material not found in either the section 24:15 text or the New Testament texts, in particular, the explicit emphasis on the private nature of the rite’s performance.

The instructions suggest that the rite be performed in secret “lest thou provoke” the recipients, a concern not found in the New Testament texts. The difference may again be a result of cultural change. It is possible that in Judea the act would not have offended as much as shamed the community, hospitality being part of a larger social structure involving shame and honour. This social dynamic, while present to some degree, did not have the same importance in early modern

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struction . . . God’s curse does not consist of divine action but rather of divine inaction. When a people sin to the point that judgment must come, destruction results; but it comes because of the removal of God’s Spirit, prophets, and restraining hand.”

western culture. Moreover, it is possible that because of the general Christian environment, performance of the act was perceived through the lens of the New Testament and therefore the negative valence was recognized, thus importance of performing it in secret.

Of course, this brings up the question as to whom the rite is for. Presumably it is an indictment against the one who had not “received” the missionary. Yet if the individual does not witness the act, then the purpose of the rite is essentially for the one performing the rite. This perspective gains further strength when one recognizes that the instruction divorces the performance from detrimental emotional responses on the part of the performers by implying a period of time between the initial encounter and the performance itself. Thus this new set of instructions may have had the intent of limiting the frequency of performance, by suggesting a “cooling off” period from the immediate emotional response to the offense.

*Section 75:19–22.* Five months later, in January of 1832, in a set of general instructions to missionaries we are told: “In whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you, leave your blessing upon that house. And in whatsoever house ye enter, and they receive you not, ye shall depart speedily from that house, and shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them. And you shall be filled joy and gladness; and know this, that in the day of judgment you shall be judges of that house, and condemn them; and it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment for that house.”

Like other instructions in the Doctrine and Covenants, this one again addresses non-reception, but unlike the other two also includes instructions concerning reception, specifically that the missionaries leave a blessing on the house that does receive them, instruction similar to that found in the Matthean and Luke 10 references.<sup>33</sup> The consequences are again to be experienced at the Day of Judgment.

The text also expands on the responsibilities of the performer addressed in the section 60 text, as the reader is now told that the missionary was to leave the situation “speedily,” perhaps to avoid escalation

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<sup>33</sup> Yet even this similarity differs slightly. The Lukan text suggests that a blessing was to be placed on the house upon entrance and before other hospitality elements were experienced, not after the reception has been provided.

and potential violence between the missionary and the offender. Yet the quick response allows for the potential of a hasty decision on the part of the missionary, meaning that while they may have been physically separated from the scene, if they interpreted “speedily” to mean a small probationary time between the encounter and the performance of the rite, it was possible that the wrong decision may have been made. The negative potential for a quick response is tempered by the next set of instruction, which lays out the responsibility of the performer. We are told that the performer was also required to judge the household at the Day of Judgment. Thus, the rite no longer witnesses against others in terms of their salvation, but one that has bearing on the missionaries own eternal responsibilities. This understanding has the potential of instilling within the missionary reluctance toward frequent performance, relegating the rite to occasional use.

Though we are not told the specific consequences of the condemnation, we are told that those condemned will be worse off than the heathen, who have displaced Sodom and Gomorrah as the object of comparison.<sup>34</sup> Alluding to the heathen, who were understood as those who were not Christian, instead of Sodom and Gomorrah, suggests that “receiving” was now understood primarily in terms of message and not hospitality.

Most important, we are told that when performed properly, the performer should experience joy and gladness. These two positive emotional results are found elsewhere in the scriptures often denoting the emotional state of the righteous, particularly in their praise of God’s delivering power and presence and can be contrasted with negative emotional responses such as a sense of vindication or satisfaction of vengeance; if the latter are experienced then one can expect the rite has failed.<sup>35</sup> Again, this suggests that the focus of the rite is no longer on the household or city but on the missionary himself.

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<sup>34</sup> The term “heathen” shows up three times in the Doctrine and Covenants (45:54; 75:22; 90:10). In all three references, the term appears to refer to those who do not possess the Gospel message. In the 1800s the term also connoted non-Christians. Whether or not the term as used in all of the Doctrine and Covenants texts should be understood in this manner is unclear.

<sup>35</sup> For more on ritual failure see *When Rituals go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, ed. by Ute Hüsken (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007)

Section 84:88–93. The fourth passage is found in section 84:88–93 and is itself part of a larger passage concerning missionary work:

And whoso receiveth you, therefore I will be also, for I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.

Whoso receiveth you receiveth me; and same will feed you, and clothe you, and give you money.

And he who feeds you, or clothes you, or gives you money, shall in nowise lose his reward.

And he that doeth not these things is not my disciple; by this you may know my disciples.

He that receiveth you not, go away from him alone by yourselves, and cleanse your feet even with water, pure water, whether in heat or in cold, and bear testimony of it unto your Father which is in heaven, and return not again unto that man.

And in whatsoever village or city ye enter, do likewise.

Nevertheless, search diligently and spare not; and wo unto that house, or that village, or city that rejecteth you, or your words, or your testimony concerning me.

This is the most detailed of all the prescriptive ritual texts, both in the New Testament and Doctrine and Covenants, concerning the rite of wiping dust off the feet and is the only Doctrine and Covenants text that explicitly substitutes the performer for Christ himself (“whoso receiveth you receiveth me”).<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the “receiving” is explicitly

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and Ronald Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 199–205.

<sup>36</sup> The principle of receiving Christ is found throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, many of them incorporating entrance imagery. For instance, in section 132 we are told: “For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me. But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation; that where I am ye shall be also” (21–23).

associated with specific hospitality responsibilities: feeding the guest, providing clothing for the guest, and providing funds, reminiscent of the responsibilities outlined in Christ’s sermon recorded in Matthew 25 describing the hospitable nature of the true Christian disciple.

Yet, for all of its detail, this entire passage reveals one of the more frustrating elements of studying ritual. While there is greater detail in places, the text is opaque in others making it difficult to discern the full-ritualized environment. For instance, unlike the other Doctrine and Covenants texts, there is no mention of shaking the dust off the feet; instead we are provided with much greater detail concerning the act as a washing. Specifically, though the temperature does not seem to be a factor, we are told the water must be pure, suggesting running water rather than standing water. Coupled with the verb *cleanse*, the use of pure water suggests a rite of purification, but from what the missionary needed to be purified is not mentioned nor is that verb even employed in the text. Thus, while the detail suggests that the instruction is significant, the reason for the significance is not explained.

Another unique feature of this text is that it separates the testimonial from the physical act by stating that one is to wash his feet and then “bear testimony of it unto your Father.” This change in the rite’s structure is notable in that it makes the act repetitious, the verbal element performing the same purpose as the physical element. As with other modern innovations to the rite, the redundant nature of these two elements may point to a loss of the original symbolism, as those from the New Testament time period would have simply understood the inherent symbolic nature of the act.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ritual often has built-in redundancy, part of which has to do with the inherent danger of ritual situations. Because ritual plays a functional role in establishing, maintaining or dissolving social relations, ritualized environments are often characterized by the loosening of social boundaries, which may result in inappropriate behaviour and violation of social norms, thus the purpose of the ritual or its meaning is repeated in various ways within the ritual experience. For example, the dedication of the tabernacle, as described in Exodus 40, is reinforced not only in a series of physical acts (the washing and anointing and offering of sacrifice as found in 1-11, Leviticus 9), but also in the clothing itself and in changes of scent from one state to another (. All of these have the same general purpose, to denote the transforming nature of the tabernacle (see Exodus.

Finally, this text states that once this rite has been performed the performer is never to return to that the household or city again. This suggests that the community against which the rite has been performed has forfeited the opportunity for future salvation, a sobering consequence which furthers the increasing sense of responsibility placed on the performer that the former Doctrine and Covenants texts had begun to establish and which may also suggest that the rite was to be only used after all other options have failed.

As if to emphasize this last principle, the passage ends with the injunction to “search diligently and spare not”, followed by a woe declaration on those who “rejecteth you, or your words, or your testimony concerning me.” While this last clause may be referring to the rite in question, it appears that the subject has now become more generalized, the reception referring to the overall gospel message, and not specific rites of hospitality, a development in the rite that we have seen in earlier references. This seems more likely as one continues through the section, for those that do reject the message will be scourged for their wickedness and taken from the face of the earth.

*Section 99:4.* The last reference recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants concerning this rite was recorded in August of 1832; John Murdock is told prior to missionary labours that: “[And] whoso rejecteth you shall be rejected of my Father and his house; and you shall cleanse your feet in the secret places by the way for a testimony against them.” Though small in comparison to section 84, this passage is the most explicit concerning the reciprocal inhospitality that the rite implies in the New Testament.<sup>38</sup> As the passage makes clear, rejection of the messenger will led to rejection by the Father and his household; in other words, the offender will experience divine inhospitality for their own rejection of the his messengers.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, it is unclear as to

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<sup>38</sup> Intriguingly the verb “reject” now takes the place of “receive” as found in all the other references, both in the Doctrine and Covenants and New Testament.

<sup>39</sup> Throughout the scriptures, the term house is used to describe both the physical building in which people live and the household, which includes the genetic relations and servants who reside within. As such it becomes a term used to describe the entire family structure of tribes, such that we can speak of the house of Judah, house of David, and house of Israel. Though the terms God and house together usually describe the temple, there are a few references in which God and house refer to the social setting; for instance, in 1 Timothy

what “rejected” here refers. If one takes the perspective of the New Testament texts, then the rejection carries the primary nuance of hospitality; if taken from the perspective of the other Doctrine and Covenants texts, then the rejection appears to be the gospel message itself, and of course this is complicated by the fact that there appears to be overlap between the two anyway. As to the rite itself, little is mentioned that hasn’t been already discussed. Again, the rite is described as a cleansing of the feet, which assumes a washing but is not explicitly described as such and the injunction to do this in secret has been noted already.

*Joseph Smith’s 1835 Letter to the Elders.* Beyond these five references in the Doctrine and Covenants, there are no other canonical texts that mention the rite in the modern era. But there is at least one prescriptive text found in the writings of Joseph Smith which adds to our understanding of the rite. In a letter delivered to the elders of the Church in November 1835, Joseph described the responsibilities the missionary had in certain socio-cultural relations, such as the parent/child, husband/wife, master/slave/servant:

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3:15, we are told that the house of God is “the church of the living God.” In 1 Peter 2:5, it is worthy priesthood holders who are a “spiritual house”; later in the letter Peter tells us that judgment: “must begin at the house of God (4:17)” or the sacred society of the church. In Doctrine and Covenants 85:7, we are told of one “mighty and strong” who will “set in order the house of God” and “arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints.” In all of these, it is the house as social unit and not house as physical structure that is discussed. In Section 130:2, we are informed, “the same sociality that exists here exists there only coupled with eternal glory.” In light of the dual use of “house” Doctrine and Covenants 132:18 and its mention of the “house of order” may refer to house as social unit, in that the entire verse describes those who are to be received or not received. Moreover, it is the relationship between mortals and the gods and angels that is the focus, not a building. God’s household is one of order, thus the one who does not approach the proper way cannot be received either by him or the other members of the household. Finally, because the house of God is described as one of order, the theme of divine hospitality also fits within another prevalent biblical theme, that of cosmos vs. chaos. For more on the house as social unit see David J. Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East*, Studies in the Archaeology and History of the Levant 2 (Winona Lake, IN: (Eisenbrauns, 2001).



It should be the duty of elders, when they enter into any house, to let their labours and warning voice, be unto the master of that house: and if he receive the gospel, then he may extend his influence to his wife also, with consent, that peradventure she may receive the gospel; but if a man receive not the gospel, but gives his consent that his wife may receive it, and she believes, then let her receive it. But if the man forbid his wife, or his children before they are of age, to receive the gospel, then it should be the duty of the elder to go his way and use no influence against him: and let the responsibility be upon his head—shake off the dust of thy feet as a testimony against him, and thy skirts shall then be clear of their souls. Their sins are not to be answered upon such as God hath sent to warn them to flee the wrath to come, and save themselves from this untoward generation. . . . It should be the duty of an elder, when he enters into a house to salute the master of that house, and if he gain his consent, then he may preach to all that are in that house, but if he gain not his consent, let him go not unto his slaves or servants, but let the responsibility be upon the head of the master of that house, and the consequences thereof; and the guilt of that house is no longer upon thy skirts: Thou art free; therefore, shake off the dust of thy feet, and go thy way.<sup>40</sup>

As one can see, this text points to a number of ways in which the rite had changed from the New Testament version not the least of which is that reception of the missionary is in no way tied to hospitality. Whereas in the Doctrine and Covenants texts the reader is unsure exactly what is meant by “receive,” in the letter reception is tied directly to receiving the gospel message. We are also told that the performance of the rite displaces the missionary’s responsibility toward the household, thus if the man of the house refuses to let the other members of the

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Smith, “Letter to the Elders of the Church,” *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (Nov 1835): 209–212; *History of the Church*, 2:259–264. This letter is often quoted as it explains well the responsibilities of missionaries, but intriguingly, the paragraph concerning the rite is often left out. For example, it is missing in both Alma P. Burton’s *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977) and Donald Q. Cannon, Larry Dahl, *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997).

household “receive” the gospel, then the missionary is to leave, shake the dust as a testimony against him (the father), and in so doing, the missionary is no longer responsible for the spiritual welfare of the house. Moreover, the rite of wiping dust off the feet is associated with another similar rite, that of shaking one’s clothing, a purification ritual.

*Shaking versus wiping.* Because Joseph associates the rite of wiping dust off one’s feet with the rite of shaking one’s clothing, it may help to review briefly the rite of shaking one’s clothing historically and see if the parallel exists anciently as well. Like texts for the wiping dust off one’s feet, canonical texts concerning the shaking of clothing are few in number, though intriguingly, there are no prescriptive texts, only descriptive ones. In those instances where one shook one’s clothing, hospitality does not seem to be at issue, but instead becoming clean from the sins of the offender is apparently the purpose. The only biblical text describing the shaking of clothing is in Acts 18, when, during a confrontation with a group of blasphemous Jews, Paul shook his raiment and said unto them, “your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean and will henceforth go unto the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

In terms of comparison, while this rite signifies separation from the performer and the offender, as the rite of wiping dust off feet does, there is no terminology suggesting that reception, or hospitality, is at issue. Instead, the act exemplifies Paul’s claim that he is clean from the blood of the assembly similar to purpose behind the removal of the clothing by those who stoned Stephen as described in Acts 7. In both cases, it appears that the rite of taking off and shaking the cloak or clothing represents a separation on the part of the performer from liability of the offense (coincidentally, blasphemy in both events).<sup>41</sup>

Jacob in the Book of Mormon gives us perhaps the most details concerning the rite of shaking of clothing as the record suggests he performed this rite repeatedly. The first reference is in 2 Nephi 9:44, where

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<sup>41</sup> The association of blood and sin is of course an old one stemming from the Garden of Eden account. The equating of clothing with one’s moral status is also an old one beginning in the garden. Moreover, the association of clothing with accountability is one found elsewhere as well, see Acts 22:22–23, where, following Paul’s recounting of his vision, the audience: “then lifted their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.”

the rite's performance does not appear to be associated with any antagonism to the message or inhospitality experienced by the prophet: "Remember my words, behold I take off my garments, and I shake them before you...wherefore, ye shall know at the last day, when all men shall be judged of their works, that the God of Israel did witness that I shook your iniquities from my soul, and that I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood." Though the overall theme of his message is one of hope and security, Jacob explicitly states that his performing of the rite is to act as a witness that he is no longer to be held accountable for his audience's "blood," or in other words, their spiritual welfare concerning the message.

Later, in his own book, Jacob stated that he and the other leaders of the Church "did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility, answering the sins of the people upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence; wherefore, by labouring with our might their blood might not come upon our garments, and we would not be found spotless at the last day" (Jacob 1:19). As before, Jacob expresses his concern for the sins of the people and particularly that he will be held accountable, as symbolized by their blood on his clothes. Finally, at the beginning of his temple discourse recorded in Jacob 2-3, Jacob states, "To magnify mine office with soberness, and that I might rid my garments of your sins, I come up into the temple this day that I might declare unto you the word of God" (Jacob 2:2). Like the preceding verse, it is unknown whether the rite was actually performed, but it is alluded to with the mention of ridding his garments of the people's sins, effectively demonstrating that Jacob's intended purpose is to not be held accountable for the sins of his people.

In all four references just cited, the rite of shaking one's garment is entirely concerned with the participant's personal accountability as the audience's spiritual leader. In these cases, once the prophet has fulfilled their responsibility of declaring God's word the rite of shaking the clothing becomes a witness that they are clean of any consequences if the particular instruction is not kept. Only in the Pauline account is there any indication that the audience is antagonistic to the prophetic message, in fact it is entirely possible that Jacob's audience not only received the warning, but changed their own behaviour accordingly. At any rate, it is clear that historically, (in)hospitality has nothing to do with this rite, thus the practice of shaking off one's cloth-

ing is, at least canonically, practically and ritualistically distinct from wiping dust off one’s feet.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, in Joseph’s letter to the elders elements of the shaking of clothing and wiping dust off the feet have clearly overlapped. The amalgamation of the two may reflect the changing perspective as to the purpose of wiping dust off one’s feet. First, as the letter demonstrates, hospitality is no longer the implied meaning when one speaks of “receiving” the missionaries, instead reception means accepting the gospel message. Second, in the Doctrine and Covenants texts one can trace a change in the focus of the rite from the offender to the performer, particularly in those texts that developed the missionary’s responsibility concerning the rite. Thus the rite of wiping dust off one’s feet was performed when the missionaries felt they had fulfilled to the best of their abilities the stewardship to deliver the message, a rite that is now functionally equivalent to the shaking of one’s clothing.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Many LDS commentaries include Nehemiah 5:12-13 as a text describing the shaking of clothing. Yet the context of the Nehemiah passage makes clear the purpose that his particular performance is not the same as that of Jacob’s or Paul’s shaking. Nehemiah’s performance is similar to treaty oaths found elsewhere: “Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise. Also, I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied.” As this text demonstrates Nehemiah is not symbolically making himself clean of their sins but establishing divine retribution if they do not live up to their oath. The distinction between purpose or function and form is an important one for those who study ritual because many rites may appear similar to one another and yet have completely different meanings, like shaking and dusting. For more on treaty curses see Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).

<sup>43</sup> There is no official record that indicates the rite of shaking one’s garments has been practiced in this dispensation. There is mention of its performance by Parley P. Pratt as a missionary according to the journal of Ashbel Kitchell, a Shaker elder (the following keeps the original spelling and grammar): “We continued on friendly terms in the way of trade and other acts of good neighborhood until the spring of 1831 when we were visited on Saturday evening by Sidney Rigdon and Leman Copley, the latter of whom had been among us; but no likeing the cross any to well, had taken up with Mormonism as the easier plan and had been appointed by them as one of the missionaries to convert us. They tarried all night, and in the course of the evening, the doctrines of the

NINETEENTH-CENTURY PERFORMANCES  
OF WIPING DUST OFF THE FEET

In terms of descriptive texts, unlike the scriptural canon, we have a number of personal journals from nineteenth-century mission-

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cross and the Mormon faith were both investigated; and we found that the life of ~~Christ~~ self-denial corresponded better with the life of Christ, than Mormonism...Sabbath morning matters moved on pleasantly in sociable chat with the Brethren, until I felt to give them all some council, which was for neither to force their doctrine on the other at this time; but let the time be spent in feeling the Spirit, as it was Rigdon's first visit... A little before meeting, another one came from the Mormon camp as an assistant, by the name of Parley Pratt. He called them out, and enquired [sic] how they had got along? and was informed by Rigdon and Leman, that I had bound them to silence, and nothing could be done. Parley told them to pay no attention to me, for they had come with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the people must hear it, &c. They came into meeting and sat quietly until the meeting was through, and the people dismissed; when Sidney Rigdon arose and stated that he had a message from the Lord Jesus Christ to this people; could he have the privilege of delivering it? He was told he might. He then read the following Message [the text of D&C, section 49]. At the close of the reading, he asked if they could be permitted to go forth in the exercise of their gift and office—I told him that the piece he had read, bore on its face, the image of its author; that the Christ that dictated that, I was well acquainted with, and had been, from a boy; that I had been much troubled to get rid of his influence, and I wished to have nothing more to do with him; and as for any gift he had authorized them to exercise among us, I would release them & their Christ from any further burden about us, and take all the responsibility on myself. Sidney made answer—this you ~~are~~ cannot do; I wish to hear the people speak. I told him if he desired it, they could speak for themselves, and stepped back and told them to let the man know how they felt; which they did in something like these words; that they were fully satisfied with what they had, and wished to have nothing to do with either them or their Christ. On hearing this Rigdon professed to be satisfied, and put his paper by; but Parley Pratt arose and commenced shaking his coat-tail; he said he shook the dust from his garments as a testimony against us, that we had rejected the word of the Lord Jesus. Before the words were out of his mouth, I was to him, and said;—You filthy Beast....I then turned to the Believers and said, now we will go home and started...they all followed us to the house...Sidney stayed for supper...He was treated kindly and let go after supper. But Leman tarried all night and started for home in the morning." For the full account see Lawrence R. Flake, "A Shaker View of a Mormon Mission," in *Brigham Young University Studies* 20/1 (1979), 94–98.

aries giving us insight into how they practiced, and therefore understood, the rite.<sup>44</sup> As one reviews these descriptive texts, while there is a variety in the manner by which the rite is described, a pattern emerges as to how the individual missionaries thought about the rite. First and foremost, as one might expect, it is clear that the missionaries performed the rite when the gospel was not received by those who they encountered, regardless of whether hospitality was offered or not. For instance, in John Murdock’s missionary journal, he records: “We . . . laboured from morning till noon endeavouring to get a chance to preach, but we were not successful. I was turned out of doors for calling on the wool-carder to repent. After dinner we took leave of the two ladies and the family with which we had dined and wiped our feet as a testimony against that city.”<sup>45</sup> Though no mention is made as to whether or not he was “received,” it would appear that common hospitality was enjoyed by the missionaries. Murdock explicitly mentions that he had been fed by at least one household and in another, even though he was eventually “turned out of doors,” had been clearly invited in originally (you cannot be turned out, if you weren’t invited in).<sup>46</sup> Yet, in terms of being able to preach, they were “unsuccessful” and thus wiped their feet against the city (including the two families that entertained them, presumably).

William E. McLellin, who records in his journals that he performed the rite no less than six times during his mission, recounts

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<sup>44</sup>Most of the accounts that follow can be found in the Mormon Missionary Diaries Collection found in the Digital Collection of the L. Tom Perry Special Collection department of the Brigham Young University Harold B. Lee Library. The collection holds the diaries of 220 missionaries, most from the 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Of these only 20 mention the performance of wiping dust off the feet. Space does not allow for each individual account in the paper itself so the reader is directed to the appendix at the end of the paper.

<sup>45</sup> *John Murdock Journal and Autobiography* (Archival Manuscript, Special Collections of Harold B. Lee Library), 14 June 1831. As for the performance of the rite, it appears that Murdock is using the New Testament text to describe his own practice since wiping does not appear in any of the Doctrine and Covenants texts, but is the New Testament verb.

<sup>46</sup> In fact, the text above suggests that Murdock may have been an ungracious guest by his condemning his host in the host’s own home, which would have justified, at least following the norms of hospitality, turning him out of the house.

performing the rite after having been invited to speak before a Campbellite gathering. According to his account, they asked him to stop speaking, which he did after bearing his testimony, whereupon they then invited his companion to speak for ten minutes as well.<sup>47</sup> As in Murdock's account, the missionaries are given space and time to deliver the message. Neither missionary was cast out or not given a chance to speak, the audience simply did not accept the message.

Approximately fifty years later, Jesse Bennett recorded in his journal while on a mission to Samoa that in a particular village the chief rejected the message, but invited the missionaries to stay for breakfast, whereupon the elders read them "the words of the Saviour, when you go from one city if they do not receive you flee to another." At this the local minister got upset, asked them to leave, which they did and "shook the dust off of our feet against them and went on our way rejoicing."<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Sidney Ottley describes his experiences in New Zealand, where, in one particular village they met three members of the church and an "aetheist (sic.) who has been a great friend to the Elders for 16 yrs," yet this did not deter them the next day from being "glad to shake [Wanganui's] dust from our feet."

One humorous account can be found in the journal of Ellis Seymour Heninger, who in 1900 recorded that as a missionary in the southern states he had been invited to spend an evening with acquaintances. The evening was apparently an enjoyable one, ending with ice

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<sup>47</sup> *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831-1836*, eds. Jan Shippo and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah and Urbana and Chicago, IL: BYU Studies and University of Illinois Press, 1994), November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1831 (61). The other performances also demonstrate that non-reception of the message not inhospitality was the cause for performance. In one case, the rite was performed as the elders find a schoolhouse they were scheduled to speak in still locked up. In another, the rite was performed following a confrontation with a preacher who charged them fifty cents for breakfast, and in yet another the rite was performed when a tavern keeper "abused" the two elders after they had asked for bread and milk without paying for it. Finally, in the last one, after having been invited in to speak before a gathering and after having done so for two hours, following which the elders asked for monetary donations and having received none, the two felt that they had done their duty and "we wiped the dust of our feet and we also cleansed our feet in pure water" (182-183).

<sup>48</sup> *The Journals of Jesse Bennett, 1869-1949*, vol. 1, 1889-1890, September 14-15, 1889, 53-5.

cream and cake. The following morning, the elders went tracting in the suburbs of the same city and “shook the dust of our feet against the people,” again, presumably against those of whom they enjoyed their company the night before.<sup>49</sup>

In other accounts, performance of the rite appears to have been a reaction to disappointment. Oliver Huntington describes the difficulties of finding an audience during early winter in 1849. According to his journal, the ground was covered in snow and it was extremely cold, thus no one was willing to listen to them outside nor were they successful in finding a room to preach. He writes that he and his companion decided to try the village again in warmer weather. He then states that he and his companion felt like shaking the dust off their feet but decided against it.

While the accounts suggest that the rite was performed sometimes without much thought, but understood to be simply what one did following rejection, others journal entries depict concern by the specific elder as to the appropriateness of the rite in the case of basic rejection. William Robinson, a missionary in Colorado, writes in his journal entry for November 28, 1897 records while there was lack of hospitality and general disinterest in the gospel while on his mission in Colorado, he decides not to perform the rite: “Not a soul to hear us at either of the three meetings we appointed for to-day, yet we desire to be compassionate and instead of shaking the dust off our feet as a testimony against them we prefer to repeat those immortal words of the Master: ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they do.’” Elder Nephi Pratt expressed similar misgivings in his 1906 conference report concerning the missionary labours in the Northwest: “We have oftentimes felt appalled at the indifference manifested in the larger cities . . . and have sometimes thought that all had been done there, . . . but we had a doubt whether we ought to shake off the dust from our feet.”<sup>50</sup>

Thus from the journals themselves, we can conclude that within the first century of the church in this dispensation, the rite functioned primarily to signify those who had not received the message of the Restoration, whether hospitality was offered or not to the mis-

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<sup>49</sup> Journal of Ellis Seymour Heninger, vol. 1 1899-1900), September 11-12, 1900, 116-7.

<sup>50</sup> Conference Report, April 1906.



sionaries. While for some elders, the rite expressed their own disappointment or discouragement, there also seems to have been an undercurrent of uncertainty as to whether or not rejection merited the rite's performance. In this we see a developing sense that missionary work may include more than one presentation, an approach that is simply taken for granted in modern missionary work. Also significant is of the accounts reviewed by this author only two ever suggested that immediate results to the rite were expected following the performance, an outcome of the rite as understood today that is almost universal.<sup>51</sup>

### SHAKING DUST OFF FEET IN THE LATTER NINETEENTH TO EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Following Joseph Smith's letter of 1835, there does not appear to be any more official instructions concerning this rite though a letter dated May 22, 1842, titled *An Epistle of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo to the Saints scattered abroad* concludes with following instruction: "Brethren, with all these considerations before you, in relation to your afflictions, we think it expedient to admonish you, that you bear, and forbear, as becometh Saints, and having done all that is lawful and right, to obtain justice of those that injure you, wherein you come short of obtaining it, commit the residue to the just judgment of God, and shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony of having done so." The letter is signed by the stake presidents and high council of Nauvoo, and not by the presiding quorum of

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<sup>51</sup> Journal of Oz Flake, vol. 1, 1897-1998, 179, Southern States Mission: "April 14, 1898—some of the people are very careless about our work some are interested while others are opposed. But it seems to me signs enough are given the people a preacher last year made a big fight against two of our Elders (Jones & Com) in this state they washed feet against him and in 4 days he died another Minister recently made a big fight against two of our boys, in Webster County (Porter & Com.) kept them out of an appointed and waged war on them and in two weeks dropped dead in his pulpit. There is often just such signs and others. Such as healing the sick and yet the people say all these signs are done away with but they have no proof of it. While we have plenty of evidence that it is they are not "there are none so blind as they who will not see." The second account is found in Lucy Mack Smith's commentary concerning a performance of the rite by her son Samuel and discussed later in this paper (see note

the church. Because it was published in *Times and Seasons*, of which Joseph Smith is the chief editor, one may presume it was at least unofficially approved of by the First Presidency. In the letter those members who wish to gather with the Saints to Nauvoo but are unable to do so are instructed as to what to do if threatened with loss of land or other economic means by those antagonistic to the Church.<sup>52</sup>

Because the letter is not for missionaries, it is not surprising to find no reception terminology common to the other ritual texts described above, yet this in and of itself is intriguing since all other references to this rite so far have been in the context of missionary work. Though texts describing actual performance are found overwhelmingly in missionary journals, this instruction suggests that the rite was understood as more than merely a missionary one, but one that could be used for cases of general persecution, particularly of violent nature, of non-travelling members, and only as a last resort; in these cases reception of the gospel message is tangential, if at all important. Unfortunately, examples of shaking dust off one's feet for the purpose of general persecution outside of the missionary field are quite rare, so it is unknown as to how common this specific form of practice was in the early church period.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *Times and Seasons*, vol. 3. The names of the signed are: William Marks, Austin Cowles (Presidents), Charles C. Rich, James Allred, Elias Higbee, George W. Harris, Aaron Johnson, William Huntington, Sen., Henry G. Sherwood, Samuel E. Bent, Lewis D. Wilson, David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, Newel Knight, Leonard Soby (Attestators), Hosea Stout (Clerk).

<sup>53</sup> The one account that is known of the performance of the rite of wiping dust off the feet for general persecution of non-missionary saints is described by Brigham Young in the *Documentary History of the Church*, vol. VII, 557: “The labours of the day having been brought to a close at so early an hour, viz., eight-thirty, it was thought proper to have a little season of recreation. Accordingly, Brother Hanson was invited to produce his violin, which he did, and played several lively airs accompanied by Elisha Averett on his flute, among others some very good lively dancing tunes. This was too much for the gravity of Brother Joseph Young who indulged in dancing a hornpipe, and was soon joined by several others, and before the dance was over several French fours were indulged in. The first was opened by myself with Sister Whitney and Elder Heber C. Kimball and partner. The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers, and while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from our feet as a testimony against the nation.”

Following this instruction nothing more is known until 1899, when correspondence between Ben E. Rich, then president of the Southern States Mission, and the First Presidency via George Reynolds suggest that Church leadership believed wholesale practice of the rite in the Southern States Mission was not necessary. In February 1899, President Rich wrote to the First Presidency asking for advice. According to his letter, President Rich stated that a letter from one of the conference presidents was being circulated in the Southern States mission who instructed the missionaries to close individual counties by washing their feet against the given county and then recording when, at which stream and by whom the rite was performed. President Rich, on the other hand, was concerned about performing the rite indiscriminately as was often done in the past and therefore wrote to Reynolds hoping for a response from the First Presidency.

Responding to this letter, Reynolds stated (presumably with the authority of the First Presidency behind him), “If an elder feels that he has just cause and is moved upon by the spirit of God to wash his feet against a person or persons who have violently or wickedly rejected the truth, let him do so quietly and beyond noting it in his journal let him not make it public.” While the rite is still performed for the sake of rejection, this marks the first known time that the rite being performed under the influence of the Spirit is mentioned, and explicitly associates violent behaviour of the non-member with a consequent performance, though the violence is explicitly expressed in the rejection of the message, not violent removal of property, as suggested in the 1842 letter.

Though the Rich-Reynolds correspondence suggests that the First Presidency was revising the way they understood the rite in both performance and meaning, it is not until 1915, with the publication of *Jesus the Christ* by James Talmage that a “public” statement is made. Though the study did not claim to represent the official voice of the First Presidency, Talmage’s ecclesiastical authority and secular excellence, gave the work quasi-canonical status.<sup>54</sup> In a one of the footnotes, Talmage addressed the rite in the following manner:

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<sup>54</sup> James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission According to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Deseret News, 1915), The work’s status with regards to the canon is admittedly a little confusing. Though not one of the

To ceremonially shake the dust of the feet from one's feet as a testimony against another was understood by the Jews to symbolize a cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow. It became an ordinance of accusation and testimony by the Lord's instructions to His apostles as cited in the text. In the current dispensation, the Lord has similarly directed His authorized servants to so testify against those who wilfully and maliciously oppose the truth when authoritatively presented (see Doc. and Cov. 24:1; 60:15; 84:92; 99:4). The responsibility of testifying before the Lord by this accusing symbol is so great that the means may be employed only under unusual and extreme conditions, as the Spirit of the Lord may direct.<sup>55</sup>

While the purpose behind his study was to explore the life and ministry of Christ, Talmage utilized the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants as well. It is also clear that this interpretation differs in significant ways from the canonical forms. As he often did throughout his book, Talmage gave comparative contextual material concerning the rite of shaking the dust off one's feet. Unfortunately, he did not also provide the bibliographical data to the Jewish sources, thus it is unclear whether or not these sources did in fact say what Talmage said they did (a “cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow”). Thus his contextual commentary cannot be understood as particularly useful in understanding the rite.

Of greater value is the manner by which he describes the rite using latter-day sources and terminology. It is in Talmage's description that the rite is first described as an ordinance, the term used by Latter-day Saints to describe formal ritual behaviour enacted under the authority and power of the priesthood, primarily for those rituals

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standard works, we are told in the introduction that “the completed work has been read to and is approved by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

necessary for salvation.<sup>56</sup> Thus, even though the priesthood is not mentioned anywhere in Talmage's text or in any of the canonical ones, by naming the rite as an ordinance, the performance of the rite becomes one of the ritualized ways to exercise the priesthood.

Moreover, his commentary concerning the rite appears to reflect an amalgam of the purpose for the rite as found in the 1842 letter for non-missionaries and the 1899 First Presidency letter which was for missionaries. The note arises within the context of the Christ's instructions to his disciples prior to their missionary labours, but the purpose of the rite, as explained in the footnote, is not in response to hospitality or rejection, but malicious opposition to the missionary work. Talmage, apparently following the lead of the First Presidency in the 1899 letter, also suggests that the rite should be used rarely, "under unusual and extreme conditions" and only "when the Spirit of the Lord dictates," though what constitutes "unusual and extreme" is left undefined, reflecting the same ambiguity concerning appropriateness as the letter. Regardless of the challenges Talmage's commentary may well be the most recognized text concerning the rite of wiping dust off the feet within LDS literature. As we shall see, its influence can certainly be felt in twentieth-century texts concerning the rite.

#### SHAKING DUST OFF FEET SINCE ELDER TALMAGE'S TIME

In the twentieth century, discussion of wiping dust off the feet has fallen into three categories. The first of these are statements made by General Authorities, which may be found in either public addresses or in published works. Such texts are quite rare. In fact, over the past century and a half only three references to the rite have been men-

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<sup>56</sup> Not all ordinances, as understood this way, are necessarily salvific. The general church priesthood manual, *Duties and Blessings of the Priesthood: Basic Manual for Priesthood Holders, Part B* describes two types of ordinances: "Ordinances that are necessary for us to return to Heavenly Father include baptism, confirmation, the sacrament, conferral of the Melchizedek Priesthood (for brethren), the temple endowment, and temple marriage...The Lord has given many priesthood ordinances that we may receive or perform for guidance and comfort. These include the naming and blessing of children, administering to the sick, patriarchal blessings, father's blessings, blessings of guidance and comfort, and dedication of graves."

tioned in a general conference setting. The first, though technically in the nineteenth century, is in an 1899 general conference talk by John Taylor who paraphrases the New Testament texts in a larger context of missionary work.<sup>57</sup> The second is the address by Nephi Pratt was described earlier. Finally in April 1968, Elder S. Dilworth Young mentions the performance of this rite when describing the role of witnessing by the Quorum of the Seventy. Unfortunately, it is unclear as to whether he was describing on-going practice, actual responsibilities of the Seventy, or his own earlier missionary experiences.<sup>58</sup>

There are also in this first category a few comments made by General Authorities in their own studies. J. Reuben Clark addresses the rite in his book *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, focusing on the manner by which the rite absolved one from the sins of the other.<sup>59</sup> He also suggests that the ability to perform the rite is a key of the priesthood. Joseph Fielding Smith addressed the rite in his study, *Church History and Modern Revelation* and mentioned that performance of the rite cleanses the missionary of the “blood” of the wicked.<sup>60</sup> John

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<sup>57</sup> John Taylor, General Conference, April 1899: “I say this is the way Christ is going to Judge the world, for He gave a special commandment that when you should go into a house or a city you should enquire who is worthy to receive you, and if they do so, let your peace rest upon that household and say unto them, ‘the kingdom of God is nigh unto you; but if they reject you shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them, for it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the city of Sodom or Gomorrhah than for that city or household that rejecteth you.’” Interestingly, President Taylor is not directly quoting a specific New Testament passage since the term “reject” does not appear in any of the KJV New Testament texts.

<sup>58</sup> Elder S. Dilworth Young, *Conference Report*, April 1968: “There have been times when we thought that if we approached a man, and he, hostile because of stories he had heard about us, or suspicious because we were strangers, rebuffed us, then we had done our duty by shaking off the dust of our feet against him. We have not done that duty until we have given him a fair chance to learn that his prejudices are unfounded. To find families and show them by our love that we are truly followers of Jesus Christ is our manifest duty.”

<sup>59</sup> J. Reuben Clark, *On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life: a series of radio talks* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970). The book is a compilation of a radio series by President Clark beginning in 1949.

<sup>60</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 206: “When our Lord sent forth his disciples to proclaim

A. Widtsoe also mentions the rite in his study *Priesthood and Church Government* under the chapter concerning missionary work, though he provides no commentary on it at all and simply quotes Joseph Smith's letter discussed earlier in this paper.<sup>61</sup> Bruce R. McConkie also addresses this rite in both *Mormon Doctrine* and his New Testament studies, such as the *Mortal Messiah*. His comments are brief and are similar to those of Talmage, emphasizing the role of the Spirit in determining whether or not the rite should be performed.

The difficulty here is trying to discern as to whether or not these sources reflect official church stances. Both Smith's and Widtsoe's studies became manuals of instruction for priesthood meetings, but texts by non-apostles were also used and approved of by the First Presidency prior to correlation for church classroom material. In terms of official texts by the church, no instruction appears to have been provided except for that found in the canon and Joseph Smith's letter.<sup>62</sup>

The second category of discussion is that found in LDS scriptural commentaries, predominantly *Doctrine and Covenants* commentaries, of which the first was Hyrum Smith's and Janne Sjodahl's series published in 1927 and which relied on the same supposed Jewish tradition references by Talmage for the contextualization of the rite.<sup>63</sup> While there are a number of commentaries spanning the

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the gospel message he instructed them to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against those who opposed them...The elders were to seek out from among the people the honest in heart and leaven their warning testimony with all others, thus they would become clean from their blood."

<sup>61</sup>John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939).

<sup>62</sup>The General Handbook of Instructions emerged in 1960; there are earlier publications such as the Handbook of Instructions for Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks (published from 1928-1950), and even earlier texts such as the Annual Instructions and Circular of Instructions (interchangeable titles from 1890-1923). In none of these are there instructions concerning the performance of this rite. Nor are there any in any Handbook of Instructions for Mission President's Handbook of Instructions (the earliest of which seems to be 1959).

<sup>63</sup>Hyrum Smith and Janne E. Sjodahl, *The Doctrine and Covenants: containing revelations given to Joseph Smith, Jr., the prophet/with an introduction and historical and exegetical notes by Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Printed by Deseret News Press, 1927), who provide commentary to the

past century, the majority of them rely on the words of the General Authorities mentioned above, predominantly Smith’s *Church History and Modern Revelation* and Talmage’s insights, as well as Smith’s and Sjordahl’s commentary (which indirectly appears to be utilizing Talmage).<sup>64</sup> These generally repeat the same understanding (the necessity of having the Spirit, the rareness of actual performance, the non-differentiation between wiping dust off one’s feet and shaking clothing), but more recent commentaries have begun to emphasize that priesthood keys, and therefore specific priesthood authority, are necessary to perform the rite.<sup>65</sup>

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rite for section 24, 60, 103. For section 24, they provide Jewish tradition like Talmage, though they do not provide sourcing for either. For section 60, they state that the rite is in response to rejection of the message, but then also add “scoffers and persecutors” to the list of those who are to receive the rite. Finally, in section 103 they give no background, but simply state that God will deliver the judgment.

<sup>64</sup> See Hoyt W. Brewster, *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1988) quotes both Smith and Sjordahl as well as Joseph Fielding Smith’s *Church History and Modern Revelation*, similarly Daniel H. Ludlow, *Companion to the Study of the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City, Utah : Deseret Book Co., 1978) quotes these two sources. L.G. Otten, C.M. Caldwell, in their study, *Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 1 (Springville, Utah: LEMB, c1982-1983) use Smith and Sjordahl as their sole source, though in their second volume they quote Smith’s CHMR directly. Richard Cowen in his study, *Answers to Your Questions Concerning the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1996) utilizes CHMR. Two more recent commentaries both use Talmage’s commentary for their description of the rite. also H. Dean Garrett, Stephen E. Robinson, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3, (Salt Lake City, Utah : Deseret Book Co., 2000–2004), and Craig Ostler, Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration: a commentary on The Doctrine and Covenants and other modern revelations*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000) quote Talmage directly.

<sup>65</sup> Craig Ostler, Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Revelations of the Restoration: a commentary on The Doctrine and Covenants and other modern revelations*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000), “After the call of the Twelve in our day, we would understand this authority to rest with them, as it did anciently, or to those to whom they directly give it. The authority to perform the same has not been given to missionaries generally. Those performing this ordinance are further directed that it not be done in the presence of those they are testifying against "lest thou provoke them, but in secret; and wash thy feet, as a testimony against them in the Day of Judgment" (D&C 60:15). See commentary on Doc-



Finally, this rite is described in anecdotal accounts most often related in the missionary field.<sup>66</sup> Of the two anecdotal collections used for this study, all anecdotes were second hand accounts that missionaries were told about in the mission field and never performed or experienced themselves.<sup>67</sup> Though the specific locations are different, the elements of the accounts are similar. Stressed in each are the serious and unique nature of the performance, the almost immediate destructive consequence on the building or city, and most importantly the importance of being led by the Spirit. Many of these accounts suggest that only a mission president or general authority can perform the rite, though this may be a result of the relative lateness of the collections (both gathered in the early 1980s) and thus reflect the growing trend within the commentaries as to the role of priesthood and priesthood keys to performance.

One particular element of these anecdotes is worth mentioning and that is the belief in immediacy of result. In all of secondary accounts, within days or weeks of the performance, the specific residence, business, community or town was destroyed.<sup>68</sup> This represents a striking

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trine and Covenants 75:20–21.” See also H. Dean Garrett, Stephen E. Robinson, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3, (Salt Lake City, Utah : Deseret Book Co., 2000–2004), 16: “Cleanse your feet even with water. This is an apostolic responsibility not extended to other missionaries. The action described here is a variation on shaking the dust off the feet.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> This paper used two folklore collections. The first collection [Curtis Webb, “Dusting Off of ohe Feet” (Logan: Utah State University, Fife Folklore Archives, 1980)] includes 14 anecdotes; the second [Carolyn S. Hudson, “Dusting of The Feet” (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University/ L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1983)] includes 15.

<sup>67</sup> These texts would fit within the third category of ritual texts described earlier in the paper: unreal ritual texts. This type of text can be characterized as fiction, but fiction that describes an actual ritual activity, thus its value is in determining the role of the ritual within a given culture’s imagination. Whether practiced or not, the presence of unreal ritual texts demonstrates that the rite, even if simply imagined, defines certain cultural practices. The non-historicity of the anecdotal accounts concerning wiping dust off feet places them within the domain of fiction, yet they clearly have a function similar to actual practice in defining the missionary and missionary work and have a clear place within the mission’s imagination.

<sup>68</sup> A few at least appear to be later explanations for phenomena that happened while missionaries were present. For instance, one account related in 1983 told

contrast between the actual performance accounts of nineteenth-century missionaries since in the latter it does not appear that the missionaries expected immediate destruction.<sup>69</sup> Thus by the end of the

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of a performance in “1970 or 1974” in which two missionaries dusted their feet against the city of Huarez, Peru. A week later an earthquake struck killing the inhabitants. Indeed there was an earthquake that struck Huarez in May of 1970, which killed approximately 20,000 inhabitants, yet this earthquake killed between 75,000 and 80,000 Peruvians total. Thus it appears that a significant, random and traumatic event was given meaning by suggesting that at least a localized aspect of it was the consequence of the performance of this rite.

<sup>69</sup> The only nineteenth century account that suggests immediate consequences is that of Samuel Smith, the brother of Joseph, who is recorded as washing his feet against an individual who promptly died of smallpox within two weeks. Unfortunately, this event is only described in Lucy Mack Smith’s history and not Samuel’s own words. According to Lucy, Samuel had been thrown out of an inn when he offered to sell a Book of Mormon to the proprietor. Two weeks later, Samuel and his parents passed the same inn and saw a small-pox warning on the inn. Upon meeting a local inhabitant they asked what happened and were told that the innkeeper and two of his family had contracted smallpox, supposedly from a traveller, and died. The individual also said that he knew of no one else contracting the disease. This is followed in the account by Lucy’s interpretation of the event: “This is a specimen of the peculiar dispositions of some individuals, who would purchase their death for a few shillings, but sacrifice their soul’s salvation rather than give a Saint of God a meal of victuals. According to the Word of God, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for such persons,” (this is page 480 of *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir*, ed. by Lavina Fielding Anderson [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001]). While Lucy’s explanation, particularly in paraphrasing the New Testament texts, suggests that she believed the deaths were the result of Samuel’s act this is not stated clearly. Moreover, one needs to take into account that these memoirs were written in 1844–45, twenty-five years after the event itself. Lucy also tells us that Samuel washed his feet in the month of June 1830, at least two weeks before the first Doctrine and Covenants set of instruction was made available. Thus, either Samuel had received earlier instruction on the rite, or had performed it without any instruction, or Lucy’s recollection of the event has been affected by the later Doctrine and Covenants instructions. In any case, since the account is not Samuel’s, but Lucy’s, who was not an actual eyewitness of the event, and recounting it twenty-five years later, this influential account appears to be the first of the anecdotal texts for this rite. Intriguingly, the account emphasizes not the rejection of the message per se, but the lack of hospitality provided.

twentieth century, the rite, though still associated with missionary work, in terms of form, effect, and purpose does not resemble the canonical versions, or even 19<sup>th</sup> century practice.

### CONCLUSION

As demonstrated above, the rite of wiping off the dust from the feet of an individual has a long, rich history noted by significant changes reflecting new cultural mores. While the rite is predominantly a mission field ritual, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a different culture than that of Late Antiquity Palestine where hospitality no longer had the same cultural importance. For instance, latter-day instruction that the rite be performed in private lest it offend others differs dramatically from the instruction in Luke 10 in which those who are not received are to go out into the street and declare their rejection while performing the act publically. The rite changed again in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The original missionary strategy, both in the New Testament and in the early part of this dispensation, was to go into a city or town, minister, and then move on to the next city without returning. In such cases, the rite of dusting off of feet makes sense as it conveys both the judgment for those who rejected the message and acts as a witness that the missionary could do no more for the people. Yet as the documents show, some missionaries were beginning to question the necessity of this rite and by the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coinciding with greater availability to more effective transportation (and therefore communication), missionary work had changed in that once a missionary companionship was moved from a particular area, these areas weren't abandoned, but received new missionaries. In other words, missionary work in a given area was now seen as an on-going experience with multiple missionary companionships and conversion of an individual a continuing process, not one limited by an initial rejection of the message, thus eliminating the need for a rite such as the dusting off of feet. Even the rite as a response to persecution, an early 20<sup>th</sup> century innovation, becomes ineffectual in this enhanced missionary culture, as the church's response to persecution was to view such as simply a greater missionary opportunity.

Yet even if the culture both inside the church and outside in the mission field changed to the extent that actual practice of this rite

was no longer necessary, the rite continued to have an impact on missionaries. As noted above, though none of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries had performed the rite themselves, they all knew of a performance in detail, having had the account transmitted to them by older missionaries in the mission field. In this, the oral telling of its practice, even if the account is fiction, can have a ritual-like outcome, specifically a greater communal sense of solidarity among the missionaries.

In most cases, missionaries are placed in new, foreign environments, meeting previously unknown individuals, also for many this is their first real time away from home for an extended period of time, all of which can be an unnerving experience. The formalized structure of the missionary's daily agenda provides an infrastructure by which they may define themselves within the new environment. Central to this is their relationship to other missionaries and the history of the mission itself, as both establish the value of the missionary's experience. The transmission of accounts concerning the wiping of dust off of one's feet emphasizes the power missionaries have to bring about change, reminding the missionary that God is watching over him or her, while at the same time reinforcing the need for obedience to the formalized structure of missionary life. Moreover, since each account is placed in a specific geographical setting within the mission area, the stories provide a sense of control over an unknown, and potentially dangerous, environment. All of these elements empower the missionary thereby making them more effective missionaries.

But the rite may have significance beyond the mission field as an example of just how innovative our ritual practice is. The manner, in which the dusting off of the feet has changed from dispensation to dispensation, even within a dispensation, demonstrates that ritual reflects changing cultural environments and needs. By understanding its origin, evolution in terms of performance and function, the rite of wiping the dust off one's feet may be a model by which we can examine the other, more prominent ritual behaviour in which we as Latter-day Saints engage and, in so doing, gain even greater appreciation and understanding as to who we are and what we are meant to do.