Mormonism's Last Colonizer

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An Aborted Mission

From its beginning, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has relied for its growth on missionary efforts. In 1830, the very year of its organization, missionaries were laboring in Canada and among Indians on the western frontier. Formal missions were established by Joseph Smith in England in 1839 and, shortly before his 1844 murder, in Tahiti. After Brigham Young had relocated the struggling church to the Great Basin, he launched a missionary movement that was astonishing in the audacity of its world outreach. Overseas missions were established in Scandinavia, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Hawaii in 1850; Australia and India in 1851; Malta and Germany in 1852; Gibraltar and South Africa in 1853; and Siam in 1854.¹

The Pacific and European missions prospered well enough. But in the others, distance, strange languages, non-Christian traditions, governmental opposition, and harsh living conditions proved too difficult. All were abandoned within a few years. Not until 1884 would there be another attempt to establish a mission in the non-Christian world. That was the Turkish Mission to which William H. Smart had now been called. Jacob Spori was its first president (1885–87). He was followed by Ferdinand F. Hintze, the president under whom Smart would serve.

In view of Smart’s experience in Turkey, it is important to know something of President Hintze. Born in Denmark in 1854, he was baptized a Mormon at age twelve, emigrated to Utah two years later, and filled missions to the northwestern states (1877–78 and 1879–80) and Scandinavia (1885–87). Clearly, he was well qualified to preside over the Turkish Mission, and no subsequent president worked harder to learn the language, understand

the people, and teach them the gospel. He returned for a second term as president (1897–1900), during which period he published 29,000 tracts in the Turkish and Armenian languages, and in 1906 published the Book of Mormon in Turkish. If any president could succeed in that mission, and deserved the respect of his missionaries, it was he.

The conditions under which Hintze and his handful of missionaries labored were at least as difficult as in other non-Christian countries; after years of unproductive struggle, the mission was closed in 1909. For Smart, the difficulties were magnified by his health problems, his inability to stay the course during this stage of his life, his lack of confidence in the mission itself, his bouts of despondence, and, worst of all, the heavy burden of guilt he carried because of his addiction to tobacco.

His record of his voyage en route to Turkey and the first weeks of his mission consisted of long letters to his wife, which she then copied into journals. In the first one, dated London, May 28, 1889, he describes the ocean voyage (he was seasick), a visit to extended family members he had previously visited with his father in the Birmingham area (he was treated well and had “plenty to eat & drink”), and a brief description of the English countryside and the London railroad station (“the largest in the world, the grand dome of glass is no less than 300 ft. wide and 900 ft. long”).

Along with the mundane, that letter included this significant statement: “On the evening of the 22 we attended the Saints meeting in Liverpool. I was honored by a seat on the stand. . . . At the close of meeting Bro. Teasdale told me he wished I had been called to the British mission. Said I could go to Turkey, ascertain what could be done there and if I thought I could not spend the time advantageously, to write him.”

The man who gave this counsel was George Teasdale, an apostle in the church since 1882. In this role, and as president of the British Mission (1887–90), he had general supervision over missionary matters in Europe and the Near East. He must have sensed some special talents or qualities in Smart to give him this highly unusual and questionable invitation to bypass his mission president and report directly to him. Whatever Teasdale intended, Smart’s broad interpretation of it would result in the undercutting of President Hintze’s authority and lead to Smart’s early release.

Smart’s voyage from London to his new mission field took nine days. Two long letters, dated Constantinople, June 7 and June 15, describe it. They filled thirty-one pages of the journal into which, despite her eye problems, the patient and long-suffering Anna was transcribing them. He described at length the sights and fashions of Paris, especially the Paris Exhibition of that year (“the greatest there has been”) with its just-completed Eiffel Tower (at 984 feet, “the highest structure in the world”). He also witnessed

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3. Alexandre Gustave Eiffel (1832–1923), whose most notable achievement was the Eiffel Tower.
the commercial beginnings of voice reproduction: a machine into which he spoke, then “placed a little tube running from machine in either ear and heard my same words,” and marveled that you could even “take from it a short pasteboard looking cylinder colored black, send it anywhere to another machine and the same voice and words will be produced.”

The trip proceeded. At Notre Dame Cathedral in Strasbourg, he was awed by the world-famous clock with its tableau of moving figures. He found Salzburg to be “the prettiest scenic town I have ever seen,” and described at length the great buildings, gardens, and monuments of Vienna. He noted the women doing “all kinds of labor even to section hands on railroad” in Hungary; the “very pretty Oxen—nearly white, very long horns” used instead of horses in “Cervia”; the people who “look only partly civilized in Bulgaria,” where “we begin to realize we are fast hurrying toward the Turks.” Coming from the dairy country of Cache Valley, he was not impressed by Bulgarian cheese. “I then tried the cheese which I thought I should enjoy being a lover of cheese,” he wrote. “When passing it to my mouth I found that the dead carcas we had been speaking of as being in the vicinacy was this lymburger cheese.”

Finally arriving in Constantinople on June 6, he was met by the sole missionary who was serving there. Elder J. Clove, Smart reported, had been eighteen months in Constantinople, had learned the language, and had a single convert, the only other Mormon, apparently, in that city. Seventeen days later, Smart wrote his first report of the mission to Apostle Teasdale in Liverpool.

Acknowledging that he knew “only what I have been able to glean from Bro. Clove,” he modestly indicated he would not “give, at present, my opinion of the mission as my experience has been nothing.” But, he reported, “street preaching is not allowed. Custom forbids going to private homes without invitation,” “their houses being a sacred place and rendered unholy by the presence of the unbeliever,” so the only way to proselytize was to rent a house and invite people to come to them. Efforts to gain

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4. In 1877, Thomas A. Edison invented a method of recording vibrations that could be played back to produce sounds. His invention involved tin foil wrapped around a revolving cylinder, into which a stylus attached to a vibrating diaphragm made indentations of various depths. Alexander Graham Bell and two associates replaced Edison's tin foil with wax and his rounded stylus with a pointed one. In 1887, they organized a company to produce and market what they called a Graphophone. It was this machine that Smart saw demonstrated in Paris. In 1894, German-born Emile Berliner brought to market a machine that replaced the cylinder with a flat disc, greatly improving sound quality and making the mass production of records possible. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968 ed., s.v. “Thomas A. Edison.”

5. Smart, Journals, December 18, 1889. This was James Clove of Panguitch, Utah. Clove was released a few months later because of poor health.

6. Ibid., June 23, 1889.
permission to print church literature had failed “owing to the influence of Protestants.” The people “seem very unstable and it seems they have little conception of the necessity of changing their mode of worship only as a means of procuring pecuniary benefit”; he gave several examples of this. As a result, he reported, the entire mission contained only six German and four native converts. “We can do nothing until we get the language, which will take at least a year,” he lamented.

Even after eighteen months in the field and learning the language, Bro. Clove says he has spent his time in studying Turkish about three hours daily, history, the customs of people, physics, drawing, mathematics, music, poetry, German, in visiting historical places, in rowing for exercise, corresponding with papers, studying scripture, and proselyting when opportunity was afforded. He has seen but little of real missionary experience and indeed has been here so long accomplishing nothing spiritually and studied so hard to inform himself and to pass away the time that he now has to refrain from hard study, exercise in open air much, being troubled with a kind of nervous debility. He is anxious to get out in the country where I think his missionary energy will return which seems evidently to have, to a degree, lost through his circumstances here.

That kind of judgmental analysis is clearly the responsibility of the mission president, not of an untried neophyte seventeen days in the mission field, himself battling his demon of an addiction to smoking. At least Smart recognized the delicacy of his position: “I have written some points of personal matters I should have refrained from, had you not desired them, and would be pleased to have them remain with you.” But there’s no question he intended to continue his role of mission analyst: “Bro. Clove thinks I shall go in the interior. If so, I shall have an opportunity to form some idea of the prospects there & give you further particulars with my conclusions concerning the mission as soon as I can arrive at any.”

In a June 23 letter to his wife, Smart expressed optimism about his efforts to overcome his addiction to nicotine. During his seasickness on the ocean voyage he had not smoked, he told her, but when his appetite for food returned so did the appetite for tobacco, with such force he decided to make no effort to quit until he reached the mission field.

I continued smoking here secretly until the night of the 14—Friday—when I threw them away again, told Bro. Clove not to prepare any meals for me until I told him to, and asked him for his prayers, which he said was pleased to grant. I fasted and prayed with much feeling and earnestness for three days. I have not smoked since. . . . My head and lungs, while being a little painful, are not to be compared with their conditions when I have endeavored to quit before. I have not been nearly so nervous. . . . Dear wife, to think how much I have suffered while endeavoring to quit at home where I was midst a temperate people, where I was ever encouraged by a loving
wife and friends, and then cast my thoughts here where the national beverage is tobacco, where the habit of smoking is indulged so greatly that even women smoke, and find here I have been able to control myself—I can only turn unto God and say: O Lord thy power is infinite and thy mercy inexhaustable! I know I have had your prayers too, I take no honor to myself, neither do I now boast as a conqueror, as but little over a week is past—but I can say I have but little hankering and unless I am tempted much beyond what I have been, I am secure.

It is well he did not boast. His victory over addiction was still years in the future.

This letter expresses clearly his feeling about the mission: “I, of course, am almost idle as yet, my system being overturned by indigestion, hence language study, the first lesson of which I took June 11, is going slowly. . . . So far none of us have studied hard. We spend about three hours daily studying and the remainder in looking at the city, reading papers, etc. . . . It does however seem to me that the majority of the bretheren laboring here have & and are spending the majority of their time in self-improvement & interest. . . . until we get the language . . . we’re dead for a year—no use at all.”

Along with these discouraging thoughts, Smart was facing money problems. “This is the most expensive mission there is,” he told Anna, and “where the money is coming from I don’t know. Somehow, I do not feel to write to anyone for it—but I suppose the Lord will provide a way if I do my duty.” Delicately, he suggested a way Anna could help.

I give you an idea of my expenses & how I am situated on this mission that you may be able to answer any inquiries concerning it. Father may like to know, or the bishop, or the president of my quorum, or some of the boys, and that you may perhaps be able to better answer if anyone wants to know if I need anything as I do not expect to mention this part of my program to anyone, unless I am forced to. Yet I do not want you to trouble about it, but you can make these facts known as my representative to any source your wisdom shall direct you, and I feel that all will be right. Otherwise if the Lord wants me to undergo another season of fasting I am here to be found.

By June 29, he had received two important bits of news. One, in a letter from Anna, was of her pregnancy with their first child.8 His response was tender and eloquent.

7. Turkish Mission MS History and Historical Reports, microfilm, LR 14250 11, LDS Church Archives. Although Smart’s journal does not mention them, mission records report that two other new missionaries, Frederick Stauffer and Edgar D. Simmons, also arrived in Constantinople on June 6.

8. Elizabeth Smart Rasmussen, “My Memoirs,” 1 and 10. This would be Elizabeth Smart, born November 1, 1889, at the home of Anna’s parents in Logan, where she was teaching at Brigham Young College. Elizabeth, or Bessie as she was known, would marry James P. Rasmussen and bear six children, three of whom would live to adulthood.
You say in one part: “Another life that is becoming so dear to me,” and tell me not to trouble about you only pray. Darling, not a day passes but my most fervent prayers ascend—I hope—to the throne of God in your behalf. Although 9000 miles stretch out their forbidding arms between us, yet you and that dear “life” grow ever dearer to me, and as I contemplate you in maternity, you appear not only that blushing, shy, tender, loving and winning maid and bride of the past, but your former attractions blend with a thoughtful, self-sacrificing, contented, saintlike, experienced, maternal air that savor of semblances of a better sphere.

The other news came in a telegram from President Hintze announcing that he was to be transferred. “I had not thought to leave here,” Smart wrote to Anna, “and hence have written less than I should have done about the city, but I must hurry briefly over it now.” He then filled what would be twenty-eight journal pages with a remarkably detailed, descriptive, informative account of late nineteenth-century Constantinople—its people, their lifestyle and forms of religious worship, its buildings, both ancient and modern, and its history, dating back to Roman times. Clearly, although the three weeks spent in Constantinople produced no missionary effort except sporadic language study, Smart found no barriers to energetic and exhaustive sightseeing.

With his departure from Constantinople, he ended the practice of having his letters copied by his wife into journals. Henceforth, he would write his journals directly, in the field. “I find,” he confided in introducing his first journal, “in the events that occur in a missionary’s experience some are not such as it would be wise to write in her pregnant state, therefore I deem it prudent to discontinue that mode.” Not mentioned was any consideration of sparing Anna, with her troubled eyesight, the burden of transcribing them.

A New Field of Labor

The city of Aintab—to which Smart and his twenty-six-year-old companion, Edgar D. Simmons of Salt Lake City, now reported—is today known as Gaziantep, a city of three-quarters of a million people in southern Turkey, near the Syrian border, 3,500 feet above sea level and near the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. It was probably founded by Hittites before 1000 B.C., was captured by the Turks early in the twelfth century, and became part of the Ottoman Empire in the early sixteenth century.9

Upon their arrival on July 9, Smart and Simmons were met by the full complement of Mormon missionaries in southern Turkey: President Hintze, who in his two-and-a-half years in the mission had traveled widely through the county and had a good command of the language; C. U. Locander of Salt Lake City, who had been six months in the mission; and George

Dieterle, a German who had been converted in Palestine. They had bap-
tized two converts, one having left for employment in Aleppo, the other
“George Vezirian [Vazerian], a young Dr here, [who] has been ordained a
teacher and is using his influence for the gospel.”

On his very first day of meeting these men, Smart was able to reach the
conclusion and confide in his journal that “Bro. Hintze feels encouraged
and thinks the mission will open up successfully. All the other bretheren
here, together with Pres. Teasdale have little faith in it.”

That assessment
of how Teasdale felt in far-away Liverpool is questionable, to say the least.
It differs sharply from an entry six months earlier in the diary of L. John
Nuttall, secretary to the First Presidency: “By letter from Bro. FF Hintze at
Haifa Jerusalem Dec 22/88 through Bro Geo[rge] Teasdale we learn that
the Turkish Mission is prospering & he calls for 6 more elders.”

The contrast between the optimism of a seasoned, dedicated mission leader
who for two and a half years had given his all to the work and the pessimism
of a recent arrival, virtually untried in church service, is striking. Perhaps
Smart, although hardly knowledgeable, was simply more realistic; indeed, the
mission did fail after twenty-five years of struggle. Or perhaps his lack of mis-
sionary conviction was related to his deep-seated guilt over smoking.

On Sunday, July 14, the tiny group met in sacrament meeting, where
“President Hintze gave us encouraging advice, telling us the mission is yet
but a trial and that we have come to aid in the test and warned us against
discouragement. Told us to preach repentance continually for the people
are rife in lying, stealing and many ungodly things. Also said that our skirts
are cleared when we preach the gospel faithfully if we fail in converting
one soul. He then moved that I be sustained as President of the Aintab
[Gaziantep] and surrounding Mission which was unanimously endorsed.”

The next day, Hintze and Locander left on horseback, leaving that area
in Smart’s hands. Hintze would go to Constantinople for another try to get
rights to print and proselytize, and Locander to Antioch to try to open a
branch there. From now on, the newly-sustained district president would
look not to his mission president but to an apostle of the church—or
higher—for his direction.

Four days later, after just nine days in southern Turkey, Smart wrote his
second letter to Apostle Teasdale, giving his conclusions about the Turkish
Mission and its future prospects. Notwithstanding Hintze’s plea to avoid dis-
couragement, his report was anything but hopeful.

My conclusions were, on account of rigidness of government, its unstabil-
ity, the difficulty in reaching the people, their little desire to receive the
gospel that I thought but little would be done now. . . . The gov. now is

10. Smart, Journals, July 9, 1889.
11. L. John Nuttall, diary, January 26, 1889, MSS 790, Special Collections, Brigham Young
University.
really based on the Koran, and the Protestants having bought rights have become really part of government and they use their influence against our obtaining right of preaching, printing etc. . . . I reported my limited faith in the mission at present and told him I should leave him to decide what I should do adding that I had a desire to labor wherever I was appointed and not change to better my personal condition.12

His smoking continued, as did his written expressions of anguish over his inability to stop. On July 20, after two days of fasting about this problem, he apparently fainted, with the resulting fall causing a slight wound over his right eye and “several sore places on different parts of my body . . . whether it was the result of a fall through a dizzy spell, or whether it was an attack of evil spirits on account of my present spiritual endeavors are questions. . . . Am praying earnestly also for God to increase my faith in this mission if I should remain, and decrease it if I should have my labouring field changed, and that [ignoring Smart’s mission president] he will direct Pres. Teasdale.”

During the following weeks he met occasionally with George Vazerian, helping this convert understand his newly found religion, and with groups of visitors in gospel or philosophical conversations that were translated by Vazerian. An Armenian contact loaned Smart the works of Milton, and he read *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The experience so affected him that he “fell imploringly upon my knees again for divine mercy and aid in another strong endeavor to place my life in conformity to the Gospel of Christ who so mercifully rendered up his life to redeem me from this primeval fall.” These works may also have been the inspiration for his decision to read the New Testament, “this being my first attempt to read it through.”13 After completing that, he tackled the Old Testament, also for the first time, and finished most of it by late August.14

Despite this immersion in the scriptures, he reached a fateful—and highly presumptuous—decision. Increasingly despondent, he would place the decision about his future not in the hands of his mission president, Hintze, or even Apostle Teasdale. He would go to the highest authority, the president of the church, Wilford Woodruff. An uncharacteristically brief journal entry, on August 21, records simply: “Confessed my sins in a letter to President Woodruff.” (This letter was not found in the correspondence of President Woodruff in the church archives.) Presumably, in confessing his sins, Smart also raised the question of release from his mission.

Six days later, having received a letter from his wife relating a dream she had about his smoking, he further bared his feelings to his journal and

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12. Smart, Journals, July 18, 1889. This letter was not found in a search of the correspondence of Apostle Teasdale in the LDS Church Archives. The Teasdale files of this period mainly contain outgoing but not incoming correspondence.

13. Ibid., August 4, 1889.

identified what he felt were additional sources of his anguish: “Sometimes I have become so utterly hopeless in over coming smoking and rendered so despondent that I have sat and smoked one cigarette after another.” But there was more than that. Together with his guilt, the complete absence of missionary spirit was overwhelming him.

The awful seclusion and monotony of life here together with the non congeniality of my spirit with that of Bro Simmons and my little faith in this mission have augmented greatly my troubles. . . . All my past sins have risen up to destroy me, and I felt I could not exist any longer without making them known to the President. In the day I reflect, pace the court, read and sometimes weep which are often continued until towards morning. Therefore I am suffering the greatest mental agony day and night. When I read the above letter I felt so keenly how unworthy I am of my wife and the fangs of the monster sin and the non deserving of father’s and brother’s kindness that I rent my hair and weeped in the most bitter anguish. Oh God! Can you pardon? Shall I be lost, or shall I ever assume manhood and honor! . . . And why have I been so, for from my youth I have had an intense desire to work righteousness! Through hereditary and the weakness of the flesh Satan has again prevailed.”15

Monotony, incompatibility with his companion, and a lack of faith in the mission are understandable, if not adequate rationalizations. Smart’s notion of hereditary addiction is also not without merit, considering that his older brother Thomas, who had given substantial support to his mission, was a smoker and drinker during much of his life.16

In this troubled spirit, Smart began a practice he would follow, on occasion, until the last days of his life: “I arose after a poor night’s rest . . . and walked through the extensive grave yard north of the City on the hills sloping north. Headstones very rude. Could smell dead bodies. Shallow graves. Animals had dug into some and ate all but a few bones. Passing over this onto the summit, I gathered stones and built an altar, dedicated it, and prayed, pleading with God to forgive my sins, beseeching Him to shield me from sin in future especially smoking.”17 In later years, he would build and pray at many such altars during his Eastern States mission and in the foothills of the Uinta and Wasatch mountains of Utah.

September 3 brought a reply to his letter to Apostle Teasdale, “deciding,” Smart confided in his journal, “we had better remain here and giving much good counsel.” But the letter was more than that; although expressed in kindly apostolic language, it can only be called a scolding.

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15. Ibid., August 27, 1889.
16. American Psychiatric Association, Manual, 268. The American Psychiatric Association reports that “the risk for smoking increases threefold if a first-degree biological relative [such as a brother] smokes. Twin and adoption studies indicate that genetic factors contribute to the onset and continuation of smoking.”
17. Smart, Journals, August 30, 1889.
Your interesting favor of July 18 has come to hand and contents noted. I am sorry to hear you have so little faith in the mission assigned you. The gospel has to be preached in Turkey in Asia . . . [and] it has fallen your lot with those who are with you to perform that labor. You must expect, my dear brother to meet with some difficulties and have your patience tested. We all have this to meet wherever our lot may be cast. . . . There is no mission that I know of but what requires patience and faithful labor to make any success. The Lord said before the church was organized that no one can assist in this work, except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things . . . . remember you are sent to the Turkish Mission to labor and ask God to give you the spirit of your mission and the language of the people, and no matter how discouraging the outlook may appear you put your trust in God and do your duty. . . . Do not be discouraged, remember you are a servant of God laboring where you are sent. If He needs you in another field He will so order it.18

That rebuke and firm instruction was clearly not what Smart expected, in light of his interpretation of Teasdale’s invitation in Liverpool that “I could go to Turkey, ascertain what could be done there and if I thought I could not spend the time advantageously, to write him.” But no matter; he was no longer relying on counsel from his mission president or even from the apostle who presided over mission affairs in Europe and the Near East. He had turned to a higher authority, the president of the church. In the meantime, as he confided in his journal, “I have decided to take a trip to Palestine while awaiting the answer of President Woodruff concerning their decision on my case, and hope by breaking monotony and in changes of scenery to overcome smoking. Besides I think surely my sins are too great for them to allow my remaining on a mission.”19

So with approval from no one and contrary to an apostle’s specific instructions, he essentially abandoned his mission to go sightseeing, rationalizing that President Woodruff’s response to his letter would end his mission anyway. To compound his insubordination as presiding elder in the Aintab District, he took Elder Simmons with him, leaving the German-speaking missionary, Dieterle, and the young doctor convert, Vazerian, on their own.

**Sightseeing in the Holy Land**

On September 12, Smart and Simmons set out for Palestine by muleback, with Smart rationalizing in his journal that “the cause of our visiting now is, that I cannot put my mind to study until I receive an answer to my letter to Pres. Woodruff, and thought the time would be best spent this way.” Four days’ journey brought them to the seaport of Alexandretta, where they took ship to Jaffa.

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18. George Teasdale papers, 1831–1907, microfilm, MS 13496, reel 12, LDS Church Archives.
19. Smart, Journals, September 3, 1889.
En route, at the port of Beirut, he displayed a burst of anger and violence uncharacteristic of the calm, persuasive way of solving problems he later practiced throughout his life. In a dispute over the fee charged by a boatman, he records: “I sprang and grabbed him by the throat and choked him until his clique broke me loose. . . . the thing was settled by our giving him 10 instead of 11 piasters. I looked rather unlike a missionary with roth upon my face, shirtsleeves dirty and blood smeared upon it from him. But I was thoroughly out of patience with this nation of thieves as they seem as far from knowing honesty as the night is from knowing day. We left about 6 p.m. but I still burning with anger.”

At Jaffa, the travelers met two missionaries from Salt Lake City, Janne Mattson Sjodahl, presiding elder over the Palestine District, and C. U. Locander, who had just joined him there. Of Sjodahl he wrote: “He has not been long in the church, but seems honest, humble, unassuming. He is well learned having been a minister. Understands Hebrew and is a good logical writer and corresponds with the Deseret News.” That Smart was impressed by Sjodahl is not surprising. Born in Sweden in 1853, he had not been a minister, but had attended the Bethel Seminary in Stockholm and Regent’s Park College in London and had served several years as general secretary of the Norwegian Baptist Union. Baptized in Manti, Utah, in 1886, he had been ordained a Seventy (an office in the higher, or Melchizedek, priesthood) in November 1888 and called to the Turkish Mission, serving in Palestine. Like Smart, he would be released from the mission early.

During their brief stay in Jaffa, Smart had his closest approach to a real missionary experience.

The missionary work has been meager. The Germans say they want to hear no more of Mormonism. The Arabs could be rapidly converted with a promise to emigrate them or aid them in some way. As soon as Bro. Sjodahl came here one came and said he wanted to be a Mormon. . . . There was another about the same time. But he put them off and explained the gospel for three months. They still wanted baptism and as they showed no spirit that justified refusal I told Bro. S. I thought they should be baptised so that Bro. Locander baptised them. I confirmed one, bro Sjodahl the other, these being the first of the Ishmaelites baptised.

What qualified Smart to make a recommendation that the more experienced missionaries would follow is not evident. With the exception of this event, he “passed the time by reading, walking, smoking, eating and sleeping. . . . I have had some Palestine wine which I like.”

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20. Ibid., September 17, 1889.
21. Ibid., September 19, 1889.
22. Ibid., September 20 and 22, 1889.
23. Ibid.
For nineteen days, September 28 to October 16, Smart and Simmons were unabashed and energetic sightseers of the sacred and historic sites of Palestine. They seemed to miss nothing, spending days in Jerusalem and its environs and traveling as far as Jericho and the Dead Sea, where he found the water warm and soothing, its buoyancy “even beyond that of Salt Lake . . . all in all it was the most enjoyable bath I think I ever had.”24

Smart’s compulsion to keep a meticulous, comprehensive journal filled 111 pages with information about this expedition, including not only the sites and each day’s incidents, but much of the history of the area, with Biblical references to the events that occurred there. As just one example, we learn from him the following about Jaffa, the Joppa of scripture: that it is believed to have existed since before the flood; that here (giving the appropriate scriptural references) were unloaded the cedars of Lebanon to build Solomon’s temple; that Jonah, fleeing from the Lord, sailed from this port for his encounter with the great fish; that here the apostle Peter received the revelation to include the gentiles in the fold of Christ; that here Peter restored Dorcas to life. And we learn that of the fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants at the time of Smart’s visit, about a thousand are Christians, a few are Jews, and the rest are “Mahomedans.”

The travelers finally returned, footsore and suffering from a variety of ailments. Two days later, Smart got an answer to his letter to President Woodruff.

He sympathizes greatly and says he is very sorry that on having received so many blessings [I] should have given way to sin so great. Tells me he sees by my letter I have suffered much remorse and that I have truly repented. Exhorts me to strive the remainder of my life to serve God, and not allow Satan to cause me to feel there is no use. Says to get rebaptized and have all my priesthood and former blessings resealed upon me, but not to be in a hurry in doing so; meantime to apply myself diligently in magnifying my calling as a missionary. It is charitable and encouraging.25

Disobedience and Disharmony

Charitable and encouraging this letter may have been, but the injunction to magnify his missionary calling was not what Smart hoped to hear, at least as far as the Turkish Mission was concerned. Three days later, ignoring counsel even from the man he believed to be the Lord’s prophet, he took the opposite course. He wrote a formal request to Apostle Teasdale for release from the mission, and cited in his journal this litany of grievances, including what seems to be a wholly unwarranted criticism of his mission president.

I have been so discouraged at the outlooks of the mission, lack of plans of

24. Ibid., October 3, 1889.
25. Ibid., October 18, 1889.
Pres. Hintze; food I cannot get used to; housing up in our place with hard study under the many unpleasant circumstances together with a deep sorrow over my past life, and sleeplessness; can not study advantageously on account of these things—especially ill health—therefor I concluded the best to do before I became entirely useless was to be released and appointed to some field where I could travel more and where I could labor without such heavy preparation. Bro. Sjodahl has also written for release, but to return home. Has been here a year, but is tired and unwell.26

Things were far from well in the Palestine District of the mission. Not only was Sjodahl, the district president, seeking release, but Locander, the other missionary stationed there, was determined to go as well. Of him, Smart wrote: “The spirit of apostacy seems to be grieving on him. He is incessantly finding fault with the authorities, etc. Using all his influence to discourage Simmons’s going back to Aintab, as he intends leaving mission and desires him to do same to somewhat take away the reproach as they are both from Salt Lake. I tell Simmons to pay no attention to him.”27

Apparently Simmons followed that counsel. No doubt with a heavy heart, knowing his companions would be going home, he returned alone to his station in Aintab. He paid for his faithfulness with his life; on February 4, 1890, he died in Turkey of smallpox. Learning of this death during a brief stay in England while en route home, Smart wrote in his journal: “This news rendered me sad indeed, and I could not help but thank God that I am here, as had I remained there I should have been very likely to meet the same awful fate.”28

So, besides President Hintze, only one missionary with whom Smart associated in Turkey or Palestine served out his full mission. That would be the German-speaking Friederich Diederle who, soon after his release, came to Utah in 1892. The other Mormon in Aintab, the young doctor and convert George Vazerian, continued to preach after the elders left, and a branch of the church with his converts was organized in 1890. According to the mission history, he later “fell into transgression and apostatized.”29

Nearly two months dragged by while the missionaries awaited Apostle Teasdale’s response to their requests for release. Walking, reading, receiving and answering mail, studying scripture, and sitting in cafes filled some of the hours, but “there is absolutely nothing to do,” Smart lamented. “No one scarcely ever calls, and almost nothing here is done in preaching the gospel. . . . Time wearily drags.” His poor health continued: “Am troubled with tightness of chest, colds, & severe cough and general weakness.”30 So did

26. Ibid., October 21, 1889.
27. Ibid., October 24, 1889.
28. Ibid., February 22, 1890.
29. Turkish Mission MS History and Historical Reports, July 7, 1889.
30. Smart, Journals, October 29, 1889.
sleepless nights: “Fleas and bed bugs are almost unendurable.”\textsuperscript{31} Idleness festered into irritation with his companions: “Locander fault finding and endeavoring to get us to travel sight seeing while Pres. Teasdale’s answer is coming, but I refuse. I don’t care to be associated with him any more than I can help.”\textsuperscript{32}

Notwithstanding President Woodruff’s expressed confidence that Smart had repented, the smoking continued. So did his attempts to rationalize his weakness.

Feel very unwell. Bad cough. Went for Pres’s letter—none. . . . Have read [in his journal] an account of my great mental sufferings while in Aintab which so vividly brings up the awfulness of that life that the tears start and shudders sweep over me. I saw that unless I succeeded in throwing off some of the bitter remorseful thoughts I had, and enjoy moderate smoking for the time at least, as best I could, that I should certainly go insane; so since coming here I have not attempted to quit, as there seems to be all the miseries I can possible stand without this.\textsuperscript{33}

This decision is a typical example of addictive behavior, yielding to the addiction as a mechanism for coping with seemingly intolerable problems. In fact, Smart’s entire ordeal with smoking precisely fits the pattern medical science describes (see chapter 2). During these years of early adulthood, Smart suffered all the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, not just occasionally but over and over again during his oft-repeated efforts to quit. In his case, a moral factor was joined to these physiological consequences—a heavy burden of guilt because of disobedience to his church’s teachings.

He and Sjodahl were out of money, adding to their troubles during this period of idleness while awaiting their release from the mission. They decided to go to Haifa to stay—free of charge, they hoped—with a German-speaking convert, George Grau. As a blacksmith, Grau was well-to-do, Smart reported, having vineyards, a “good rock house,” and a shop. “He feeds the elders when they come seems pleased to have them come; read, preach & pray for him, but never forgets to remark unpleasantly about the cost, and show his pleasure on their departure.”\textsuperscript{34}

In S. J. Sjodahl, Smart was finding a kindred spirit. His journal of December 6 records a remarkably prescient exchange of ideas.

I gave Bro. S. the ideas I have had for some time as to the need at home of a thoroughly religious paper, containing not only points of instruction and interest concerning our own people and church, but history of religion generally & biographies etc. I thought the Deseret Weekly would be well adapted to this line; also that there should be a competent editor for this

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., October 31, 1889.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., November 12, 1889.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., December 1, 1889.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., December 8, 1889.
department whose mind, ideas, and inclinations fitted him for so important a position. . . . In my opinion he would be a fit person for this work.35

Sjodahl did indeed join the staff of the Deseret News shortly after returning from his mission, and became its editor in 1906. In that year, the Deseret News expanded the religion coverage Smart envisioned to two pages, but not until 1931 was church news published as a separate section.36 In 1914, Sjodahl was called to the British Mission, where he became associate editor of the Millennial Star. Later he compiled a highly-regarded commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants.

Finally, on December 13, the long-awaited letter from Apostle Teasdale arrived. It did not contain the answer Smart hoped to hear. Teasdale wrote that he had sent the requests for release on to church headquarters, but he told the missionaries that he wanted them to remain until spring. Having no funds to purchase his passage home, Sjodahl decided to follow that counsel. But not Smart. “With the weaknesses I have in body and mind, and remorseful conscience still priding me,” he wrote, “I fear the pressures are entirely too great for me to battle with the hard circumstances of this mission, including the learning of such difficult languages. What to do, I do not know. Our welcome is already run out at Bro Grau’s.”37 His indecision was brief; having received Grau’s assurance that he would loan him the money for passage home, Smart confided in his journal on December 18 that

I have mailed a letter to Pres. Teasdale today in which I give reasons why I have concluded to return now instead of spring. My reasons are, that I cannot speak any language that can be understood here sufficiently to do any missionary work: I should be expending means—limited—to no purpose: My body and spirits are not in a healthy condition. I express myself as feeling assured if he were well acquainted with the circumstances he would thus decide; and this being the case, and as it takes so long to receive answer to a letter, I excuse myself on returning without present permition. I call his attention to the fact, also, that in England he gave me licence to leave the mission if I did not feel my time would be spent advantageously.

Smart’s unwillingness to follow counsel from an apostle or even from the church president reflects the difficulties of the mission, his lack of faith in it, and his own frequently mentioned episodes of depression aggravated by his burden of guilt. But something else was festering in him. His earlier efforts to take a second wife either soon after or in connection with his marriage to Anna suggest his strong convictions about the principle of plural marriage. Now, in his journal, he confided a remarkable declaration of conscience and of disharmony with church leadership over what he felt

35. Ibid., December 6, 1889.
37. Smart, Journals, December 13, 1889.
was dishonesty in the church’s response to the government’s anti-polygamy pressure. Probably his disharmony concerning one issue, his mission, fed his dissension concerning the other.

I cannot say whether it is an evidence of lack of faith and implicit confidence in church counsel; but I must admit ever since the active persecution of the polygamists began, and we have not only evaded in every way the officers, but gone into court and made untrue statements; have placed a clause in state Constitution in conformity to the Edmunds law; have endeavored to make the world believe we are now not entering into polygamy, or violating the law by cohabitating with our plural wives previously married; have condescended to subscribe to test oaths that stretched our consciences to the extreme, in order to vote in spite of the test oath that was to the effect that no mormon could vote; and last, but not least, taught our children to equivocate on points relative to the domestic circle and thereby nurture them in the immoral conduct of lying.—I have been prone to question the righteousness and propriety of these policies.

Then, seeming to reflect an attitude at this period of his life that he knew better than the church leaders did, he left no doubt of the course he felt should have been taken.

I cannot but hold that if we from the outset had maintained a straightforward course—proceeded in filling our sacred covenants to God, and petitioned the officials for redress of grievances as commanded by revelation, that sooner would persecution have reached its climax; and sooner would God have made bare [bare] his arm in behalf of His people. Then, too, when the climax had been reached, what a history of constancy and heroism would have been left as vantage grounds to future generations, and how with pride they would have perused those pages and would have dropped tears upon those heroic expositions as homages of united pride in love!

He was, however, humble enough to concede that possibly there “may be an invisible virtue and wisdom in this course better known to God and His immediate council on earth, and that time in her slow but constant exposition of divine wisdom may erase all doubts of expediency.”

This ambivalence—not to say dissension—about polygamy was not unique in late nineteenth-century Mormondom. It was a troubled time, during which the church wrestled with a problem that threatened to split it apart. Church officials were in hiding to avoid prosecution and prison. The government was empowered to disenfranchise polygamists and seize church property. It was under such pressure that President Woodruff issued the Manifesto against plural marriage in 1890.

The declaration was unanimously approved in that year’s general conference, but not unanimously followed, either in conscience or in practice.

38. Ibid., December 18, 1889.
Some church leaders, and many members, continued to believe the principle was essential to exaltation—and to act on their beliefs. It was not until church president Joseph F. Smith proclaimed the Second Manifesto in April 1904 that contracting a plural marriage was made grounds for excommunication. Some deeply committed members, William H. Smart among them, were not persuaded.

**Finally, a Release**

On Christmas Eve, the missionaries got their long-awaited releases—possibly just in time, in view of the depths of despondency reflected in Smart’s December 22 journal entry: “Life now to me is burdensome, loathsome, disinteresting, except when my soul is as by magic lighted up by thought of the ‘dear ones at home.’” The release, stemming from President Woodruff and relayed through Apostle Teasdale, included both Smart and Sjodahl.39

Teasdale was instructed to send them money to return home, but Smart was too impatient to wait for that. He advised Teasdale that he would borrow money from their host to get himself and Sjodahl to Liverpool. It was clear why he felt confident in getting the loan. As he told his journal: “Bro Grau’s hospitality having been taxed so heavily by the brethren staying with so much . . . and as the people make sneering remarks about our being here, he is very anxious to have us go. . . . He would rather loan us the money and chance receiving it again, it seems, than have us remain longer.”40

On January 2, he and Sjodahl jolted for eight hours in a “dead axle wagon”—in the rain—to Jaffa and caught an English merchant vessel to Alexandria. There, although “still very unwell . . . I feel but little like going out,” his passion for sightseeing won, and they visited Pompey’s Monument, which he described as a solid stone of red granite, sixty feet high and nine feet in diameter. He marveled that to bring it so far (from the quarry at Aswan, six hundred miles up the Nile) and put it in place proved “that the early fathers were not ignorant of mechanical apparatus.”41

The next day, January 11, they boarded an English steamer for Liverpool, occupying “a berth on the aft part of the deck over the screw and where we would get the full benefit of the tossing of the vessel.” He got that “benefit” in the Bay of Biscay, where a “perfect gale” with “waves almost mts high” kept him in his bunk for six days, hardly tasting any food. However, “although almost deathly sick not a fear crept into my heart, and my thoughts were alternately lifted to the promises and goodness of my Divine protector and

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40. Smart, Journals, January 2, 1890.
41. Ibid., January 10, 1890.
falling fondly upon those dear ones at home who were praying for me.”

The ship docked at Liverpool on January 26, and Smart went north to the Birmingham area to visit his father’s relatives. He found his Uncle George had “died by drinking poison for whisky last May,” bought twenty-five books “of religious and profane history, some other religious works, Logic, philosophy, etc. . . . at a cost of about $35 . . . as my fare, I think will be paid home,” and returned to Liverpool on February 1 to check in with Apostle Teasdale.

The First Presidency’s instructions to Teasdale had been clear; the missionaries were to return home. Sjodahl apparently did, but Smart did not. “President Teasdale . . . advised me to try missionary work in England awhile to see how it would agree with me if I felt well enough. As I am feeling better this meets my mind.” Teasdale agreed that the church would repay the £12 borrowed in Jaffa for his passage to Liverpool, and a letter from home brought £10 from his wife, £4 from his father, £4 from his brother Tom, £1 from James Webster, and £1 from his sister Eliza. So he was once again solvent.

He was assigned to labor in the London Conference as a companion to Hyrum Ricks. For a month, with mixed success, they did what missionaries did then and do now—distributed tracts, held gospel conversations, and studied the scriptures. He was learning more about the doctrine he had come to preach: “Wednesday 26th—finished reading Pearl of Great Price. This is a splendid work: so logical and eloquent.” During this time Smart recorded a few instances of poor health, but none of smoking. On March 2, the two companions were able to report in a priesthood meeting that they had distributed about two thousand tracts and held fourteen gospel conversations.

On March 6 came a scare: “Was awakened from slumber last night by a smothering or suffocating spell. Hyrum was also awakened by my gasping for breath. In much fear and agitation, he raised me up in bed and administered to me.” But the crisis passed by morning, and during the day they “distributed tracts and had three gospel conversations.”

He was getting into the spirit of the work, and perhaps feeling a bit proud about it. “I am pleased the Lord has opened up the way that I am getting second conversations with people and am getting our writings before them,” he confided on March 8. “Hyrum cannot understand why I get to hold more conversations than he, and also find people who will hear me again and read our works. I can’t either, so we don’t fall out in arguing the matter—but are united feeling whatever is done is for the glory of God.”

42. Ibid., January 19, 1890.
43. Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia, 4:472. Hyrum Ricks was born in Farmington, Utah, on July 24, 1852, a son of Thomas E. Ricks. He served as bishop of the Rexburg Third Ward from 1907–1910.
But on March 19 he wrote: “Slept very poorly last night. Health not so
good. Pres Learing [his district president] asked me today if I did not think
I ought to go home. I told him I wanted him to use his judgement in mat-
ter.” By April 2 it was settled: “Pres Learning having (on his own accord)
suggested my release on account of my health, to Pres Teasdale, the letter
sets the 12th [of April] for my departure.”

Sunday, April 6, he noted, was the sixtieth birthday of the church and
his own twenty-eighth birthday. It was also his last church meeting during a
mission that in the main can only be called a painful failure, but that at least
gave him some satisfaction at the end. In his final meeting he “expressed
regret that I had not been able to accomplish as much as I desired, yet did
not feel to complain against anyone unless myself. If through my breaking
the laws of nature in the past, I have sowed the seeds of dissolution, I groan
not in reaping the harvest; if, perchance, I reap from my ancestors’ sowing
[again, that suggestion of genetic causes for his addiction], I do so [illeg-
able]; if, in the wisdom of God’s mercy, He, for some unknown reason is
returning me, broken, to my home, then I thank Him for it.”

But he could not forgo recording that “during the Priesthood meeting,
Bro. Hyrum Ricks, in giving our report, said most of the conversations must
be credited to Bro. Smart.” He added that “he had taken much pleasure in
his company and could testify that he is a ‘man of God.’”

This writer of such voluble journals was clearly tired of writing, and per-
haps tired of the entire experience. All he recorded about his long trip
home, dated April 7 but obviously written much later, was this: “Having
been released honorably, and my fare paid home, I arrived about April
25th. Found all well.”