

1-1-1995

## Journal of Mormon History Vol. 21, No.1, 1995

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### Recommended Citation

(1995) "Journal of Mormon History Vol. 21, No.1, 1995," *Journal of Mormon History*: Vol. 21: Iss. 1, Article 1.  
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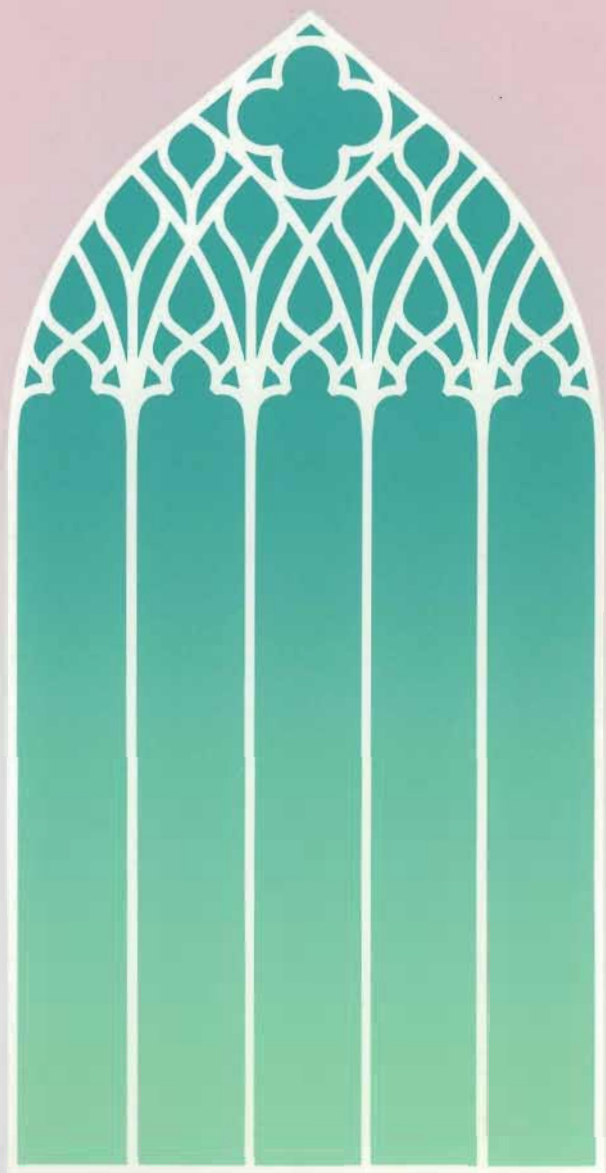
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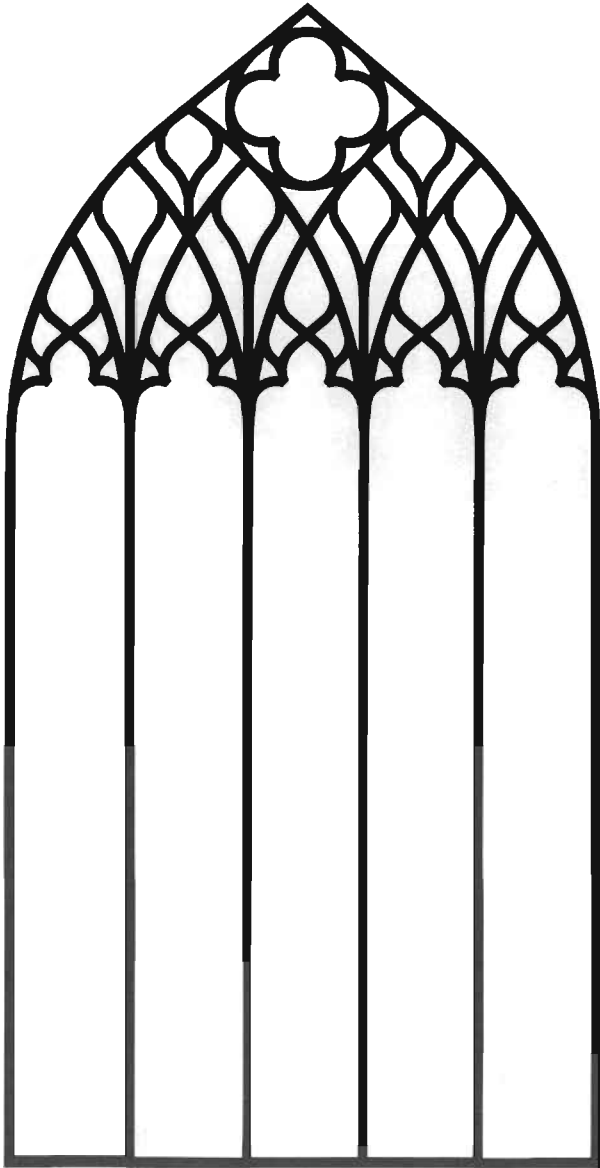
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JOURNAL OF  
MORMON HISTORY



SPRING 1995

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# Migration, Social Change, and Mormonism in Portugal

*Mark L. Grover*

In October 1975, Maria (a pseudonym), age thirteen, disembarked alone at the airport in Lisbon, Portugal.<sup>1</sup> No one was waiting for her. The previous twenty-four hours had been filled with distress, fear, and confusion. Maria, of white Portuguese ancestry, had been born and raised in the Portuguese African colony of Angola where her father, also Angola-born, was the head of a bank. The past few months in her home town of Novo Lisboa, Angola, had been a nightmare of terror. Portugal's colonial control of Angola was ending, and the removal of the Portuguese troops accompanied a steady increase in internal violence. Native Angolans, fragmenting along racial lines and supported by outside international forces, began attacking the remaining ves-

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<sup>1</sup>Maria's story comes from oral interviews with her parents and husband, conducted in May 1986 on condition of anonymity; copy of transcript in my possession.

tiges of Portuguese officialdom. Maria had been afraid for her life for weeks, subjected daily to views of bodies in the streets and other horrors of war.

Even though the level of violence was high, Maria's father had no intention of leaving. He considered himself African and believed he could ride out the unstable transition, then work with the new independent government. However, he feared for the safety of his three children; and when Maria asked to leave the country, he sent her to relatives in Portugal until the situation became more stable.

But the airport was thronged with refugees, the scene chaotic and confused. Somehow the message that Maria was coming failed to reach her relatives. No one answered her telephone calls. Exhausted and frightened, she was befriended by a woman she did not know, who took her home for several days and helped her finally locate relatives.

Conditions worsened, and Maria's parents left Angola a month later. Two years later they were baptized members of the LDS Church. The connection between their conversion and the tragic events of 1975, when over a half million whites fled from their homes in Africa to seek refuge in Portugal, may not be easily understood. Historically, however, social disruption and physical dislocation have been key variables in the expansion of what have been termed alternative religions. The history of the LDS Church in Portugal during the 1970s and early 1980s is a dramatic example of religious growth in disruptive and difficult circumstances. It also serves as a case study that can provide clues for the growth of the Church throughout the world.

### THE PORTUGUESE IN AFRICA

The Portuguese had been the first European colonists in Sub-Saharan Africa and were the last to leave four hundred years later. Though their presence was significant in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the activities of other European countries eventually limited the Portuguese presence in Africa to small areas in West Africa and the two wealthy southern colonies of Angola and Mozambique. During the 1950s and 1960s, as other European colonial powers granted independence to their African colonies, the

Portuguese increased their presence in Africa by encouraging the migration of over 200,000 whites from the continent.<sup>2</sup>

The fascist political regime of António de Oliveira Salazar and others kept Portugal isolated from the rest of Europe for almost fifty years (1926-1974), while the country concentrated on extracting wealth from its African colonies. Significant African resistance to the Portuguese presence began in 1961 with the outbreak of fighting in northern Angola. Portugal countered with a large military presence that subsequently increased the pro-independence debate. On 25 April 1974, a military coup in Portugal ended fifty years of fascist dictatorship. A political shift to the left confirmed that Portugal would leave Africa; the government granted independence to Angola and Mozambique at the end of 1975.<sup>3</sup> The immediate effects were economic. In addition to the costs of the war, Portugal lost an important source of revenue just as the world entered a global recession. The political move toward socializing the country's industry frightened away capital, further weakening the economy.

The favorable social and economic position of white colonists in Africa, already suffering during the colonial wars, ended. Some of the rich had already liquidated their holdings and left for Portugal, France, or Brazil; but most had remained, refusing to believe the new military government would actually free Portugal's wealthiest possessions. The 1975 independence announcement for the African colonies, combined with a significant

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<sup>2</sup>See Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); and Gerald Bender and P. Stanley Yoder, "Whites on the Eve of Independence: The Politics of Numbers," *Africa Today* 21 (1974): 23-37.

<sup>3</sup>John A. Marcum, "The Anguish of Angola: On Becoming Independent in the Last Quarter of the Twentieth Century," *Issue* 5 (Winter 1975): 3-11; Thomas H. Henriksen, "End of an Empire: Portugal's Collapse in Africa," *Current History* 68 (1975): 211-15, 229; F. W. Heimer, *The Decolonization Conflict in Angola, 1974-76: An Essay in Political Sociology* (Geneve: Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales Geneve, 1979); Mário António Fernandes, ed., *A Descolonização Portuguesa: A Proximidade a um Estado*, 2 vols. (Lisboa: Instituto Amaro da Costa, 1982); and Sobel Lester, ed., *Portuguese Revolution, 1974-76* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1976).

increase in violence, convinced the white population that their presence in Africa was at an end.<sup>4</sup>

The exodus from Africa was a personal tragedy for many. Within a few months, over a half million whites left Africa for Portugal. Most came by plane and boat. Others, caught in the fighting, got out any way they could. Most experienced separations from their families. Many had family members slain. Nearly all abandoned most of their possessions, entering Portugal with a suitcase or two. Precious metals were not allowed out of the country, and Lisbon banks refused to honor colonial scrip. The lucky ones had relatives who took them in. The government placed others in hotels until permanent housing could be found. Refugee camps and shanty towns sprang up on the outskirts of major cities.<sup>5</sup>

The government funneled millions of dollars into emergency assistance, but it was not enough. The Portuguese economy was weak, due to a global recession, the loss of the rich African colonies, and a change in the economic direction toward industrialization. Thanks to an unusually strong sense of identity and personal resourcefulness, the *retornados* were, for the most part, able to find jobs or start small businesses with limited government help. Within a few years, they were successfully integrated into Portuguese society. But their favored life-style and status in Africa were gone forever.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>John A. Marcus, "Southern Africa after the Collapse of Portuguese Rule," in *Africa: From Mystery to Maze*, edited by H. Kitchen (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1976), 77-133.

<sup>5</sup>"Angola: From Exodus to Rout," *Time*, 22 September 1975, 37-38; "Angola: Independence—But for Whom?" *Time*, 17 November 1976, 42-44; António Pires, *Desalojados: A tragédia nacional dos 'retornados' portugueses expulsos de Angola* (Lisboa: Livraria Popular de Francisco Franco, 1976); Manuel de Resende, *Vida de Refugiados* (Lisboa: Literal, 1977); R. Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979); and Diana Smith, "The Cruellest Month," in *Portugal in the 1980s: Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation*, edited by Kenneth Maxwell (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 17-26.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Harvey, *Portugal: Birth of a Democracy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), 126-29.



## RELIGIOUS CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Sociologists and historians have long recognized a relationship between economic and social disruptions caused by migration and the growth of new and alternative religions. Emilio Willems, in *Followers of the New Faith*, examined the growth of pentecostalism in Brazil and Chile. He noted a direct correlation between the growth of Pentecostal churches and widespread migration into the cities. Rural migrants were often separated from their families and from the churches that traditionally supplied social, emotional, and occasional economic support. Looking for replacement support systems, many found that the energetic missionary activities of pentecostal churches, coupled with the general ineffectiveness of Catholic organizations, made changing religions attractive.<sup>7</sup>

Willems's study focused primarily on the migration of the lower classes and concentrated on economic and social variables, but similar results follow migration among the middle and upper classes.<sup>8</sup> A person's separation from family and tradition

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<sup>7</sup>Emilio Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Cultural Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 83-92. See also Esdras Borges Costa, "Protestantism, Modernization, and Cultural Change in Brazil" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 1979); Christian D'Epina, *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile* (London: Butterworth Press, 1969); William C. Gates, *Industrialization: Brazil's Catalyst for Church Growth, A Study of the Rio Area* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1972); Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine, "Five Factors Crucial to the Growth and Spread of a Modern Religious Movement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 7 (Spring 1968): 23-40; and Juarez Ruben Bradão Lopes, *Desenvolvimento e mudança social: Formação da sociedade urbano-industrial no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1968).

<sup>8</sup>For examples of studies examining religious change among the middle class, see Mark L. Grover, "Mormonism in Brazil: Religion and Dependency in Latin America" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985); Takashi Maeyama, "Religião, Parentesco e as Classes Médias dos Japoneses no Brasil Urbano," in *Assimilação dos Japoneses no Brasil*, edited by Hiroshi Saito and Takashi Maeyama (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1973), 240-72; Bryan Wilson, *Contemporary Transformations of Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976); and Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The*

increases the potential for changes in religious affiliation. Significant social and economic changes always result in greater mobility and, consequently, a larger pool of potential converts for new religious groups with aggressive missionary programs. In Portugal during the 1970s, the traumatic political and economic changes resulted in thousands of *retornados* affiliating with new religious groups.<sup>9</sup>

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RETORNADOS

Most *retornados* immediately dropped from middle or upper class to extreme poverty. The dependence on families and the government for support was psychologically shattering as well as socially humiliating.<sup>10</sup> The violence of the immediate past and the disruption of the hasty exodus left many *retornados* suffering from nightmares, anger, prolonged depression, and melancholia.<sup>11</sup>

For most *retornados*, settling in Portugal was not returning "home" but leaving the uniquely African social, cultural, and

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*Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>9</sup>For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses had been in Portugal since 1925, with missionary activities beginning in earnest in the 1940s, despite active persecution by the government. In 1971 they had 108 congregations and 1,203 baptisms. After the coup, baptisms jumped to almost four thousand in 1975, and a new congregation was formed almost weekly. That surge created by the return from Africa lasted until 1978. By 1981, growth dropped to the pre-revolutionary level of 1,200 baptisms. *1983 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1983): 130-256.

<sup>10</sup>Jim R. Lewis and Allan M. Williams, "The Economic Impact of Return Migration in Central Portugal," in *Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems*, edited by Russell King (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 104-7. For the reintegration of the *retornados*, see R. Pena Pires et al., *Os retornados: um estudo sociográfico* (Lisboa: Instituto de Estudos Para o Desenvolvimento, 1984) and Jim R. Lewis and Allan M. Williams, "Portugal's *Retornados*: Reintegration or Rejection?" *Iberian Studies* 14 (Spring-Autumn 1985): 11-23.

<sup>11</sup>Dale Lee Dixon, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Lisbon, Portugal, 16 May 1986; and Arnaldo Hernani Teneiro Teles Grilo and Eugênia de Carlos Lopes Teles Grilo, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Lisbon, Portugal, 13 May 1986.

economic institutions the Portuguese community had created overseas. Many felt uneasy with life in Portugal and suffered some degree of alienation. Many who went to rural areas soon migrated to cities, not only for jobs but also for the psychological comfort of associating with former colonists.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Portugal's citizens definitely had mixed feelings about the colonists' return, especially since a similar number of Portuguese "guest-workers" returning from recession-smitten European countries increased the already high unemployment rate and put an enormous strain on the struggling economy, which many resented. The political left, though offering assistance, had ended the African idyll for the *retornados*, and had no reason to expect their loyalty; further, they feared the voting power of the generally conservative *retornados*. Hostile rhetoric and anger bristled in the media, as well as on the streets. The colonists were blamed for housing shortages, deterioration of the cities, and increases in crime and drug use.<sup>13</sup>

Some refugees could not feel at home in Portugal and went on to Brazil, France, and other countries. Many began to search for social and psychological relief. Special groups of *retornados* met the need for some. But still others found new homes in alternative religions that provided assistance, friendship, and answers to basic questions about life.

A study of the 1980 national census by the Instituto de Estudos Para o Desenvolvimento (Institute for Development Studies) showed the changing religious world of the *retornados*. Ninety-four percent of the total Portuguese population answered a question about religious affiliation while only 78 percent of the *retornados* responded. This lack of response could indicate either a rejection of Catholicism, a fear about expressing a religious preference other than Catholicism, or confusion about whether

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<sup>12</sup>Jim R. Lewis and Allan M. Williams, "Emigrantes and Retornados: A Comparative Analysis of the Economic Impact of Return Migration in the Região Centro," in *Conflict and Change in Portugal, 1974-1984*, edited by Eduardo de Sousa Ferreira and Walter C. Opello, Jr. (Lisboa: C.E.D.E.P. and Editorial Teorema, 1985), 230.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis and Williams, "Emigrantes and Retornados," 221.

their new religion was "Protestant," "other Christians," or "other non-Christians."

An evaluation of the percentage that did declare a religious preference indicates a decided shift away from the Catholic Church. Ninety-three percent of the *retornados* indicated preference for the Catholic Church as compared to 95 percent of the non-*retornado* group. The *retornados* represented 6 percent of the total Catholic population, 9.4 percent of the Protestant population, and 10 percent of "other Christians." The non-Catholic figures would almost certainly have been higher if these figures had been included and if the silent 20 percent had responded. The author concluded: "Recognizing the limitation of the data available . . . it shows that the return has resulted in the substantial numerical increase in some minority religious groups in Portugal."<sup>14</sup> One of these new religious movements was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

### THE LDS CHURCH IN PORTUGAL

The Mormon Church's greatest success in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came in the Protestant countries of Europe and in North America. It was not until the 1950s, when missionaries began to experience limited success in Latin America, that the possibility of proselytizing on the Iberian peninsula was considered. At this time, however, both Spain and Portugal were controlled by dictators who limited the activities of non-Catholic churches.<sup>15</sup>

The end of the Portuguese dictatorship came three weeks after President Spencer W. Kimball issued an urgent challenge to leaders of the Church to expand missionary work. Kimball asked

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<sup>14</sup>Pires, *Os retornados*, 110-11. For a general historical and statistical summary of religion in general in Portugal through 1980, see "Portugal," in *World Christian Encyclopedia*, edited by David B. Barrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 574-77.

<sup>15</sup>For a study of how missionary work among Catholic countries compares with other nations, see Brad Morris, "The Internationalization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," 1972, unpublished manuscript, copy in the Historical Department Archives, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives).

David M. Kennedy, a former member of U.S. President Richard Nixon's cabinet, to negotiate with the new leftist military leaders about permitting the entry of missionaries. After several meetings with cabinet-level officials, Kennedy obtained the Portuguese government's permission to open a mission. Kennedy, in commenting on his success, specifically targeted Portugal because of its social disruption: "When President Kimball asked me which countries I thought we could open up, I said I would put Portugal first on the list because the people there were undergoing massive change. The timing looked good."<sup>16</sup>

Establishing the Church in Portugal was facilitated by forty years of experience in Brazil. Not only was there a group of seasoned Portuguese-speaking leaders in Brazil, but there was also a secular bureaucratic structure with language translation and publication services. Church leaders in Salt Lake City determined that half of the missionaries should be native Brazilians and that the first mission president in Portugal should have previously served in a similar capacity in Brazil. The person selected was William Grant Bangerter, president of the Brazilian Mission between 1958 and 1963. Bangerter and his family arrived in Lisbon in November 1974. He served for a year, then was replaced by W. Lynn Pinegar, a three-year-term president. The first missionaries were four seasoned elders transferred from Brazil.<sup>17</sup>

The first few months were frustrating for the missionaries, partly due to Portugal's political situation. The conservative dictatorship had been replaced by a strong anti-American leftist group, resulting in uneasy relations with the United States. Within this uncertain political environment, Church leaders feared that if the presence of Mormon missionaries became widely known, certain

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<sup>16</sup>David M. Kennedy, "The Opening of Portugal," 1, unpublished manuscript, edited by Spencer Palmer; photocopy in my possession.

<sup>17</sup>See Historical Record of the Portugal Mission, 1973, 1974, 1975, LDS Church Archives. It was probably written by Bangerter. See also Dale Earl Thompson, *Diaries, 1973-May 1975*, photocopy in LDS Church Archives (Thompson was one of the first missionaries in Portugal); and William Grant Bangerter, *Oral History*, interviewed by Gordon Irving, 1976, James H. Moyle Oral History Program, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, LDS Church Archives.

**Table 1: Baptism Numbers**

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Baptisms</i>
November 1974 - April 1975	12
May 1975 - October 1975	30
November 1975 - April 1976	96
May 1976 - October 1976	97
November 1976 - April 1977	218
May 1977 - October 1977	262

Source: Calculated from baptismal records and reports at the Portugal Lisbon Mission Home.

governmental elements might push for the Church's expulsion. Consequently, the opening of the mission was not announced, even in American Church publications. Missionaries were forbidden door-to-door contacting, the common activity in most new missions, and instead concentrated on searching for relatives and friends of members in Brazil. These restrictions and the resultant low success were difficult for missionaries who had come from Brazil, with one of the highest baptism rates in the world. Furthermore, the Portuguese were unfamiliar with and generally unsympathetic to non-Catholic proselytizing activities. Mormonism's growth in Portugal during the first year was slow and difficult.<sup>18</sup>

In Lisbon, a few English-speaking members met weekly for services in private homes. As investigators increased, the group rented a hall in a local hotel for Sunday meetings. The branch president was Ray Caldwell, a Canadian embassy worker. Caldwell conducted the meetings in English, and a Brazilian missionary translated. The first Portuguese baptism occurred in March 1975 with an average of seven baptisms per month for the next six months.<sup>19</sup>

During the last months of 1975, as the Mormon missionaries

<sup>18</sup>Bangerter, Oral History; Thompson, Diaries.

<sup>19</sup>Historical Record, 1974, 4-5.

**Table 2: Baptisms Per Missionary**

<i>Time Period</i>	<i>Baptisms</i>
November 1974 - October 1975	.5
November 1975 - October 1976	3.8
November 1976 - October 1977	5.6
November 1984 - October 1985	8.08

Source: Calculated from baptismal records and reports at the Portugal Lisbon Mission Home.

began encountering more and more African immigrants, they experienced a change in the level and success of missionary work. In September, the Mission History noted: "The evacuation of people from Angola has been intensified as more than 200,000 have yet to leave that country before November. It has caused a lot of commotion and feelings are very sensitive from these refugees. Some of the elders are now teaching some of these families who have had to leave all but the clothes on their backs."<sup>20</sup>

Missionary success dramatically increased during this period. (See Table 1.) During the first year, just over forty were baptized. During the next six months, close to one hundred were baptized, a level sustained during the following half year.

The natural evolution of a new mission, plus an increase in the number of missionaries, would predict an increase in baptisms even without changed circumstances, without the impetus of the new members from Africa. By 1977, the number of missionaries had increased from the initial four to just over 90. However, the average number of baptisms per missionary increased significantly. (See Table 2.) The average number of baptisms per missionary for the first year was .5. When missionaries began teaching *retornados* the next year, the figure increased to 3.8 baptisms per year. By 1985, the baptisms-per-missionary rate was 8.08.

By 23 November 1975, there were fifty-one members in

<sup>20</sup>Historical Record, 31 September-6 October 1975.

Lisbon (recent converts and members who had moved to Portugal), but attendance at sacrament meetings exceeded 130. A few months earlier, missionaries had struggled to find investigators; now they struggled to find enough time to teach those interested. At the end of November, the mission history stated, "The work is growing at an incredible rate. The missionaries are working at an unbelievable speed trying to find time for all of their investigators."<sup>21</sup> Within two years, Mormon missionaries were consistently baptizing more converts in Portugal than in any other European mission of the Church. Six years later in 1981, the Lisbon Portugal Stake was organized with over a thousand members, staffed primarily by recent Portuguese converts. In 1983, A. Theodore Tuttle, the General Authority supervisor for Europe, declared that Portugal is the "key that will open up Europe and help the Church grow in that part of the world."<sup>22</sup>

In 1985, over 50 percent of the membership of the Church in Portugal had previously lived in Africa. Reuben Perry Ficklin, mission president from 1984 to 1987, contrasted the missionaries' success among the *retornados* with the comparative disinterest of the labor migrants who had returned to Portugal about the same time. "Those that went to Europe lost nothing. They come back, and they still have the same social peers, the same traditions, the same economic base upon which they live their lives. Whereas the Africans lost everything. There is no structure left holding them up. There is no peer group, no tradition, no family pressure to get them to stay in the Catholic Church."<sup>23</sup>

Two case studies show how a disruption of daily life created an environment in which two families accepted Mormonism. These examples are typical of what *retornados* experienced leaving Africa and then joining the Church. Arnaldo Hernani Teneiro Teles Grilo and his wife Eugênia de Carlos Lopes Grilo

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<sup>21</sup>Historical Record, 2-8, 23-29 November 1975.

<sup>22</sup>As quoted in Harold G. Hillam, "Mensagem do presidente," *Caravela*, March 1983, 1; photocopy in my possession. The *Caravela* was the missionaries' monthly newsletter.

<sup>23</sup>Reuben Perry Ficklin, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Lisbon, Portugal, 9 and 27 May 1986.



were born and raised in Angola. Arnaldo worked first for the Portuguese government and then for a private Portuguese agricultural bank in Angola. He was financially well off, owning several cars and four houses. They did not leave Angola until their bank was attacked. Late at night, they hastily packed a few suitcases and within five hours were on a flight to Portugal. The government lodged them temporarily in a hotel. They sent their three children north to relatives in Coimbra and Chaves, while Arnaldo attempted to obtain another position with his bank. It took him almost a year to find work and reunite the family in a small apartment.

At this point, they met the missionaries. Eugênia commented: "I had the sensation I had died materially. I had died. We had to begin at the complete bottom once again. . . . When we arrived in Portugal we had nothing. We didn't even own a bed, we had absolutely nothing." She turned to her faith in God and it "did not allow me to remain angry or depressed. I prayed every day for Him to help us." The separation from her children focused her mind on the important things of life. When the family was finally reunited, "I vividly remember the joy of my children when we were able to get back together. They would say to me: 'Don't worry Mom. We will make it.' The joy of being together was incredible. The life we had in Angola was good and we were happy, but here we have a much greater purpose in life and now we have a greater joy." A crucial moment came "one day in February [when] I prayed very hard to the Lord and said I wanted to understand my new life and dedicate my life to serving him. It was because of this that when the missionaries knocked on our door we could accept the gospel. . . . It appeared that we were prepared to accept the Church."

Arnaldo shared the same view: "We lost everything we owned in Angola but got the Church of Jesus Christ. I have an impression that it was not only us, but that a large percentage of the members of the Church here in Portugal are Angolan and Mozambiquen and that the reason all this happened was so that they could accept the gospel."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Arnaldo Hernani Teneiro Teles Grilo and Eugênia da Carlos Lopes Teles

A second example is that of Francisco Saraiva dos Santos. Born in Portugal, he immigrated to Africa as a teenager. After twenty years in Angola, he owned a hotel, was building a second, and had a large sum of money in the bank. He took his family to Portugal in November 1975 for safety. He was planning to return, but the government refused to let him, so he stayed at the home of relatives in a small interior town. He left his family to work at a pet shop in Coimbra; but when the job didn't materialize, he began baking small pastries in his home and selling them to shops, markets, and street vendors. His wife also worked; between them, they earned barely enough to support themselves. Francisco was angry with the Portuguese government and blamed them for his problems.

At this point, they met the missionaries. Though he had never been interested in religion, the missionaries interested him in their message. He and his wife were baptized in January 1977. Though the Church did not offer material assistance, Francisco felt that "it was because I accepted the Church that I gained the necessary strength to begin living again, not in a monetary sense, but spiritually. I became enriched and there [Angola] I had nothing. It was this fact that helped me in my life." His hatred toward the government dissolved. "I stopped being a violent person. I became patient and learned to accept things the way they were." From concentrating on making money, he "tried to learn how to appreciate life. I was able to overcome most of my difficulties."<sup>25</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Shifts from traditional to alternative religions have received considerable attention over the past twenty years. In most cases, scholars agree, disruption in personal life or mind set creates an environment in which accepting a new religion with unique or unusual ideas becomes more possible. If the disruption is signifi-

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Grilo, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Lisbon, Portugal, 13 May 1986. Arnaldo died in 1990.

<sup>25</sup>Francisco Saraiva dos Santos, Oral History, interviewed by Mark L. Grover, Coimbra, Portugal, 20 May 1986; see also Don L. Searle, "Discovering the Gospel Riches in Portugal." *Ensign* 17 (October 1987): 10-15.

cant and an alternative is attractive and available, then the possibility for religious change is enhanced.

The dramatic and disruptive decolonization of Portuguese Africa was of such magnitude that those whites leaving Africa were susceptible to religious change. As a consequence, in the 1970s and early 1980s, alternative religions such as the Mormon Church experienced considerable success in Europe's most tradition-bound country.

I am not suggesting that the source of converts came totally from Africa, because many non-*retornados* joined the Church at the same time. In fact, the number of *retornados* joining the Church at present is low. Nor do I suggest that these conversions were any less sincere or less spiritual because those involved were experiencing difficult times. The case of LDS converts, however, does show that traumatic events frequently make investigators more open to the gospel.

The experience of the LDS Church in Portugal is not unlike that of other European countries. French fleeing from Algeria at their independence in the early 1960s joined the LDS Church in significant numbers. Immigrants from Africa and the Middle East form significant parts of congregations in most countries of Europe.<sup>26</sup> Understanding how new religions grow in the face of economic and social disruptions is important in understanding the growth and development of Mormon congregations throughout the world.

The LDS Church in Portugal has continued to experience above-average growth, although the rate of *retornado* baptisms has decreased. Portugal currently has three missions, five stakes, and over thirty-five thousand members, and Portuguese youth form the core of the missionary force. Nor is the Portugal story over. The economic and political strains in Angola and Mozambique have prompted a significant migration into Portugal of black Africans, some of whom are joining the LDS Church in much the same way that white Africans did fifteen years ago.

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<sup>26</sup>There has been little written about this aspect of the history of Church growth in Europe. For some general observations, see Bruce A. Van Orden, "More Nations Than One": A Global History of the LDS Church (forthcoming).