

monism researched and published by a Finnish Mormon reflecting an understanding of both cultures. Östman grew up as a Finnish Mormon, served as a missionary in Great Britain, and is fluent in Finnish, Swedish and English, the languages of his research. He is also a founding member of the European Mormon Studies Association, which holds an annual conference and publishes *The International Journal of Mormon Studies*. As Mormonism increases in its global reach, Mormon studies as a field could better represent that growth through more local organizations for Mormon studies like EMSA and more activity by local scholars around the world. However, Mormon studies research requires a visit to the LDS church archives because of the centralization of historical documents early in the twentieth century. That centralization was significant in preserving historical data, but it has probably limited the ability for local historians to operate without a trip to Salt Lake City or a proxy there to assist him or her.

Even though Östman's study focuses on a remote moment in Mormonism, I found it relevant to my current Mormon experience in Finland. Several years ago, I went to Helsinki's largest bookstore and, inspired by a blog post, decided to see what books they had about Mormonism. The religions section had no books in any languages that featured Mormonism, and so I asked a salesperson. After consulting her computer, she guided me to the American shelf of the geography section, where I found Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven* and *Escape* by Carolyn Jessop. That was it. I recalled that incident while reading *The Introduction of Mormonism to Finnish Society, 1840–1900*, and it struck me that surprisingly little has changed.

## To the Edges of Modern Life

Hugh J. Cannon. *To the Peripheries of Mormondom*, edited by Reid Neilson. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011. 336 pp. Cloth: \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1607810100

*Reviewed by Erica Eastley*

On December 4, 1920, apostles David O. McKay and Hugh J. Can-

non set off on an around-the-world journey to visit every mission in the world and some of the most isolated congregations of the church. They spent a year traveling the world, seeing for themselves the realities of life for many Mormons, especially those on the edges of the Church, and often, from the missionaries' perspectives, the edges of modern life.

Cannon wrote an account of that journey and had it nearly ready to publish when he died unexpectedly in 1931. His wife, Sarah Richards Cannon, tried to have the manuscript published in 1951, but a series of miscommunications and rejections kept the book from being published until 2005, when it was finally released by Spring Creek Book Company as *David O. McKay Around the World: An Apostolic Mission*. I read that 2005 edition not long after it was published and enjoyed it, but also wished for more background information. My wish was fulfilled with this new book edited by Reid Neilson, where he provides significantly more context and important historical detail to Cannon's account.

Neilson identifies nearly all of the people and places mentioned in the manuscript and adds many details garnered from additional sources about the journey, especially Cannon's letters home, which were published by the *Deseret News* during the trip, and McKay's personal diaries from that time. There are also thirty pages of photographs which Neilson discovered in the Church History Library and sixty pages of annotations. Finally, the excellent bibliography and several useful appendices provide important details about the history of the missions visited.

One of Neilson's valuable contributions to the historical background of McKay's tour is his suggestion that Joseph H. Stimpson, an early mission president in Japan, played a significant role in instigating the journey. Stimpson had been president of the Japan mission for five years by 1920, with almost no support from or even contact with Salt Lake. He had written again and again over the years, asking for more missionaries and for clarification about rumors that the mission would be closed, and pleading for a general authority visit. At the end of 1920 Stimpson's persistence seems to have paid off when McKay was assigned to visit the Japanese mission, along with all the other missions of the Church.

Despite Neilson's additions and contextualization, the focus of the book is Cannon's account and approximately half of the

336 pages is Cannon's words. The narrative generally has a breezy tone, describing the people and places he sees as much as detailing a religious journey. He spends a lot of time on seasickness and travel difficulties and can't seem to help boasting a bit about his own good health throughout the journey. Cannon's intended audience was faithful members of the church, particularly those in Utah, and one goal was to help those members visualize the peripheries of Mormondom. It's unfortunate the manuscript was never published for that audience.

As expected from a book written in the 1920s, there is plenty of dated language. The "natives" are usually described as "child-like" and "dark-skinned," while the wives of the mission presidents are "hospitable" and "industrious gems." There is plenty of astonishment at all the new things they see, but there are several times when Cannon finds practices that "seem peculiar or even ridiculous to us [which] might be imitated with profit." I'd be interested to know if McKay or Cannon changed any of their habits based on their travels.

My favorite parts of the book were descriptions of how the church actually worked in different places at that time. One of the best was an account by McKay of the Hui Tau, an annual mission conference in New Zealand. Instead of a Utah-style meeting, we read about a local interpretation of a huge Mormon meeting. This wasn't a typical conference, but instead a several-day gathering with plenty of food, dancing, singing, prayer, and gospel discussion. Both McKay and Cannon write quite a bit about the *hongi*, a traditional Maori greeting that made them feel "that their noses had been pressed quite out of shape." McKay also provides detail about how the conference was organized and closes his account of the Hui Tau with these words: "Success and long life to the 'Hui Tau'! May each succeeding one be more successful than the last!"

There were several times when McKay's version of events, found in Neilson's endnotes, puts a different light on Cannon's account. For example, the discovery of a piece of lost luggage was a faith-promoting story for one man, but not necessarily for the other. Cannon also recounts an older, miraculous story of his father, George Q. Cannon, which likely never happened or was embellished.

But despite his exaggerations, it cannot be denied that Cannon was a thorough record-keeper. He records vivid descriptions of his reactions to RLDS missionaries; a trip to the Taj Mahal, Egypt, and Jerusalem; a visit to the Armenian mission; a missing mission president; stories about faithful members; miraculous meetings; canceling a visit to an extremely isolated member; and many stories about sacrifice. While the book can be read as a travelogue, there is plenty for the historian in this edition. For me, though, the most memorable parts of the book were where Cannon writes about the people on the edges of the church, especially since I've lived on the current geographical edges of the church myself for several years in Central Asia and the Middle East. It is the members, no matter where they are, who make the church what it is, but nowhere is that more apparent than in places like Irbid, Jordan, or Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

McKay and Cannon experienced, however briefly, a taste of lived Mormonism that is the reality for many members of the church. They spent a huge amount of time traveling and trying to communicate in many parts of the world. Although it is potentially much easier for leaders to visit or contact isolated members today, sometimes those quick flights and brief email obscure leaders' views of real life on the peripheries, especially if they don't speak the local languages. It also seems the same sort of persistence that Stimpson used in getting McKay to Japan is still needed today to make sure members have access to their leaders.

After reading the account's dated language, I also wondered what parts of our current language usage will look dated in fifty or one hundred years. Our current church peripheries are largely made up of the Muslim world, although of course not entirely, and just as our language about "the natives" has changed, I hope the way we talk about Muslims and Islam will have changed, and our perceptions of people from Muslim countries.

*To the Peripheries of Mormondom* is an engaging travelogue and it provides a rare glimpse of the church in 1921. More importantly, though, it offers insights into lessons we are still learning in the Church, and problems that will continue to challenge the institution and its leadership in the twenty-first century.