

# The Scholarly Study of Mormonism in Finland: An Overview of Literature, Research Ideas, and Sources

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The study of churches and religious movements is especially prone to the issues of bias and selective presentation due to researcher position and organizational politics. Like many other religions, Mormonism as an object of study has not escaped this problem.<sup>1</sup>

With time, though, there has been a notable change and maturing in the study of Mormonism. Increasing numbers of researchers are now looking for analytical syntheses that are both detached from religious truth claims and based on a wide range of reliable sources and methods, studying Mormonism simply as one religious tradition among others. “Mormon studies” has lately emerged as a nascent academic subdiscipline with a growing body of literature and with institutional developments taking place at various universities.<sup>2</sup> That said, however, fundamental considerations related to the academically problematic intersection between faith and scholarship still remain to be satisfactorily solved before the field can develop more fully.<sup>3</sup>

With respect to geographical concentration and cultural views, it is evident that much of what presently constitutes Mormon studies has so far been conducted from a comparatively narrow North American perspective. Research on Mormonism’s history, for instance, has been filtered mostly through a narrative centered on the United States. Mormonism in the rest of the world is, in this discourse, often simply placed under the label “the international church”—as if the United States itself were not

part of the international as opposed to the domestic in the eyes of an Asian scholar, for example. Social science research on the Church overwhelmingly focuses on the Latter-day Saints in the United States—a one-sided view when considering the rather unique nature of the American religious landscape compared with the rest of the world.

The emphasis on the North American perspective is understandable for many reasons. Mormon headquarters are located in the United States and the movement's foundational events took place there. One must also consider possible language barriers for U.S.-based scholars desiring to study the Mormon experience in other nations. Furthermore, the United States is one of the few countries where Mormonism actually has any meaningful presence on the religious scene, thus justifying larger research efforts.

It could be argued, however, that the U.S.-centric discourse has led Mormon studies into a state of myopia. While much is said among scholars concerning Mormonism as a global religion, or perhaps even as a burgeoning world religion, very little effort is expended on actually studying and analyzing the widely varying and often highly challenging Mormon experience outside the United States. When it is done, the story of Mormonism in non-U.S. nations tends to be studied through the frameworks and activities of American leaders or “gospel heroes.”<sup>4</sup> The grass-roots experience of non-U.S. Mormons is not usually elevated to a level where it could give input to the broader study of religious experience, and the complexities and implications of a non-U.S. host culture's interaction with Mormonism are seldom analyzed to any greater or meaningful extent. Mormon studies thus, probably unintentionally, tends to follow the model of colonization used by the Mormon Church itself—that is, silencing the colonized in favor of the colonizer.<sup>5</sup>

The real depths of the worldwide LDS experience will begin to be plumbed and Mormon studies will blossom more fully only when fundamental problems and limitations such as these are widely recognized and overcome. Such a paradigm shift will also enable Mormon studies to broaden its views from details of interest primarily to other Mormons and to bring it into constant dialogue with the various broader scientific disciplines to which it belongs.

With this brief contextualization in place, the rest of my article will seek to answer the call to further transnationalize Mormon studies. My immediate purpose is to map the landscape of scholarly research on Mor-

monism in the northern European country of Finland. Independent since 1917 and a member of the European Union since 1995, Finland is a country with approximately 5.2 million inhabitants and, despite a very high level of secularization, a culturally strong Evangelical Lutheran national church. A plethora of smaller religious movements operates in the country, although they are often viewed with suspicion by the mainstream population, especially if they are of foreign origin. The Mormon Church is viewed as among these movements.

I will begin my literature review by surveying the peer-reviewed scientific research done so far. I also mention some devotionally colored sources that are important in view of future research. My purpose is not to evaluate the correctness of the research, and I recognize that my overview is not deep enough for a scholar who desires to actually engage and utilize some of the prior research specifically. My purpose, rather, is to point interested researchers in the direction of existing sources by giving a general picture of prior topics, questions, and research results. In light of these data, I then propose some questions that future research could fruitfully explore. Finally, I give a brief overview of the archival and primary sources that are available for studying the Mormon experience in Finland. This present study can also, I hope, serve as a preliminary model for similar overviews concerning the study of Mormonism in other countries.

### Research Literature

Probably the largest gap in the Finnish literature is the lack of a broad scholarly introduction to Mormonism. Some brief general overviews do exist; however, due to their abbreviated nature, the interested researcher must turn to the English-language literature to get a basic sense of the LDS movement and contemporary research paradigms.

One of the earliest of these Finnish overviews describes LDS Church history, basic doctrines, and the Finnish manifestation of the Church. Authored by Alarik Corander, it is based on a paper given at a 1979 seminar on current religious movements.<sup>6</sup> The more recent general overviews to be mentioned here are included in books that chart the Finnish religious landscape. These newer texts focus mostly on the Mormon Church's formative history, its doctrines and organization, and discussions of Mormon thinking concerning society and other churches. They were authored by Harri Heino, late director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's Church Research Institute.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the paucity of general introductions, more specific research on aspects of Mormonism has been done either in Finland or dealing with Finland. I will survey this research literature in the following sections. The literature consists of scientific articles and university theses and other university-level studies, on various levels. The theses can be divided into two major groups: those that deal with Mormonism in Finland and those that deal with Mormonism in general—for example, general Mormon theology or some other aspect of Mormonism. With respect to theses, my overview is limited to describing the contents of those on the master's level and mentioning some of those on the bachelor's level. (No doctoral dissertations have been written on the topic.) My overview should not be regarded as fully comprehensive, as I may have missed some items during my search for literature.<sup>8</sup>

### *Theology*

Research on Mormonism in Finland has partly focused on Mormon theology on both a theoretical and a practical level. Studies that give a general picture deal with the main points of Mormon theology, including views on the meaning of life, salvation, and the after-life.<sup>9</sup> The master's thesis of Niina Uljas, for example, brings to the forefront the LDS view of the “plan of salvation” or the grand panorama of human existence—what happened before mortality, why human beings are in this world, how one should act during this life, and where an individual goes after death.

Latter-day Saints believe that God reveals His will to the Church's president, the prophet, just as He did to Old Testament prophets. This belief in “continuous revelation” is the explanation for some innovative doctrines that separate the Mormons from the rest of Christianity. Kirsi Lamminpää's master's thesis discusses, on the one hand, the reformatory revelations related to the cessation of polygamy and to ordaining worthy black men to the Mormon priesthood, and, on the other, the official declaration related to family values.<sup>10</sup> The author has used interviews to chart what Mormons in the southern-Finland city of Turku think about these revelations and their meaning. According to Lamminpää, continuous revelation serves as a strategy through which the Mormon Church can change and accommodate itself to new social conditions, without losing the integrity of its flexible theological structure.

One clear example of the Mormon belief in continuous revelation

is the revision of the Bible that was done by the Church's first prophet-president, Joseph Smith, who felt inspired to make changes in the biblical text, resulting in what Latter-day Saints call the Joseph Smith Translation or Inspired Version. Some research has been done in Finland on Joseph Smith's relationship to the Bible by Heikki Räisänen, now professor emeritus of New Testament exegesis. He concludes that some of Smith's revisions are naive while others provide interesting solutions to traditional theological problems in Christianity. Räisänen also suggests that theologians may benefit in their own studies from examining Smith's solutions and the underlying questions.<sup>11</sup>

Another feature of Mormon doctrine that has its origins in modern revelation is the Word of Wisdom, a kind of health code that at the same time functions as a boundary maintenance device. Finnish research has, to some extent, charted Mormon thought on health and habits of living. An article co-authored by medical doctors Pekka Roto, Terho Lehtimäki, and Sari Suurinkeroinen includes, among other things, a review of previous studies related to the health effects of observing the Word of Wisdom. The studies involve mainly American Mormons, although some of them also deal with other localities.<sup>12</sup>

The final theological characteristic of Mormonism to be mentioned here is the doctrine of temples. The first LDS temple in Finland was completed in the fall of 2006 in the southern city of Espoo. I wrote an article giving a general overview of the Mormon temple tradition, describing the meaning of temples in Mormonism, the theology and practical arrangements surrounding the temple and its religious ceremonies, and giving some idea of the importance temples hold for Finnish Mormons.<sup>13</sup> The study of Mormon temples from the Finnish perspective could be continued further by examining Finnish members' earlier temple visits in foreign nations (mostly Switzerland and Sweden) as a type of pilgrimage to sacred sites; indeed, the same perspective could be used for Mormons of many other nationalities.

In addition to these topics, theology studies on the bachelor's level have dealt with interpretations of the Book of Mormon and the use of scriptural books in a Finnish Mormon congregation.<sup>14</sup>

### *Sociology*

Sociological studies in Finland have dealt with the Latter-day Saints and their Church on both the organizational and the individual level.

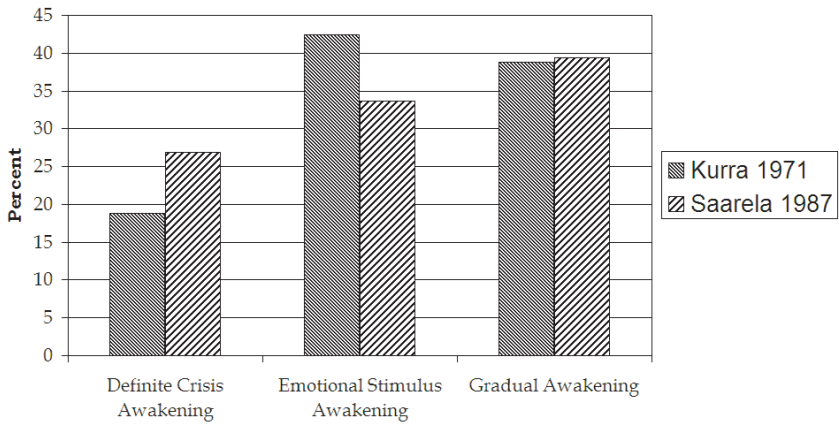
Ann-Catrin Kaski's master's thesis is an example of the first kind, describing the Church's structure and its individual and financial resources. The study is partly anchored to the Church in Finland.<sup>15</sup> A work smaller in scope by Hellä Kylmä has pondered the status of the Mormon Church from the perspective of typologizing religious organizations.<sup>16</sup>

The master's thesis of Risto Kurra deals partly with Mormonism's public image, using Finnish newspaper clippings on the Mormons between 1946 and 1968 as source material. According to Kurra, the political left and the papers of other religious organizations were the most negative about Mormons during that time, while large daily newspapers were the most matter-of-fact in their reporting. The main focus of the thesis is on the individual level, however. Kurra deals mostly with conversion and the orthodoxy of Mormon Finns based on a survey of 209 Mormons throughout Finland.<sup>17</sup>

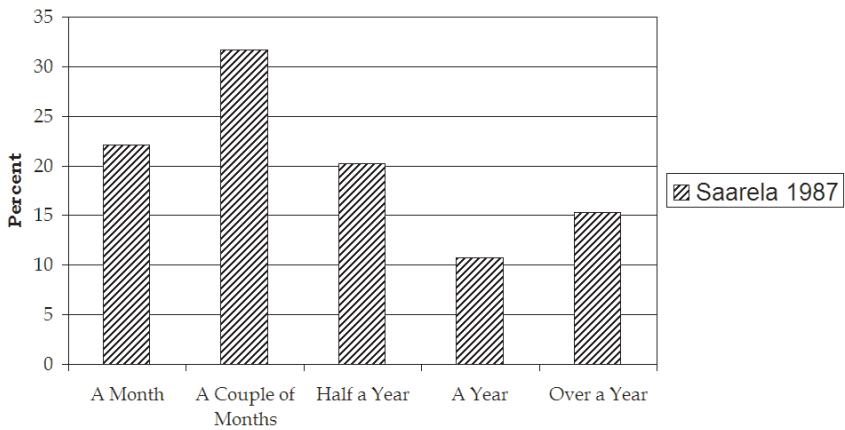
Based on Elmer T. Clark's conversion typology,<sup>18</sup> 19 percent of the members were of the "definite crisis awakening" type, meaning that conversion entailed a serious emotional crisis and included, for example, the change from a deep feeling of sinfulness to a state of peace. About two fifths or 42 percent were of the "emotional stimulus awakening" type, denoting a less clear emotional experience but involving a nevertheless clear point of decision. Finally, 39 percent were of the "gradual awakening type," meaning that they had thought about the matter for a long time and it had "grown on them."

These results can be compared with material gathered from 267 members about fifteen years later in the Tampere Finland Stake, where the corresponding rates were 27 percent, 34 percent, and 39 percent.<sup>19</sup> This later study by Sinikka Saarela also analyzes the length of the investigation period among converts. More than half of all converts had been learning about Mormonism for no more than one or two months when they accepted baptism, she found. Part of Kurra's and Saarela's research results have been compiled as Figure 1.

Research has also been done on the Mormon Church's socialization processes—the processes through which an individual internalizes Church procedures and expectations about how members should behave. The study was conducted as a project in the anthropology of religion, but I include it here with sociological studies, due to clear points of connection. Eija Taskinen describes socialization processes according to both the individual's sex and age when he or she joined the Church. According to



**Panel A. Conversion Type**



**Panel B. Time**

*Figure 1. (a) Conversion type and (b) Length of investigation period for Finnish converts to Mormonism.*

Taskinen, the lay nature of the Church results in the individual functioning in these processes both as a socializer and as the person being socialized. The study also uses a system-theoretical framework to depict the official and unofficial phases and the possible outcomes of the socialization processes.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to conversion and socialization, one master's thesis has paid attention to Mormon deconversion, although not by using Finnish source material. Instead, Vesa-Petri Lehto used eighty-four deconversion narratives housed at [www.exmormon.org](http://www.exmormon.org), an international website operated by former Mormons. Most of these narratives are written by North Americans, with at least one in Lehto's sample being written by a Finn. Lehto uses Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh's theory of role exit as his main framework for studying these narratives.<sup>21</sup> According to the results, some people take public positions in opposition to Mormonism, while others "leave" only on the level of thought, perhaps because of social reasons. As another example, some consider themselves to be Mormons and live a Mormon lifestyle even after they have become formally disaffiliated.<sup>22</sup> Although the thesis does not address the situation in Finland, it is conceivable that the reasons and the dynamics of disaffiliation may be largely similar. In any event, the matter merits further study.

As I mentioned earlier, the Mormon Church is one of several religious minorities that maintain an active presence in Finland. While the LDS membership consists mostly of native Finns, the Church, like many other religious minorities, is often viewed as "the other." This phenomenon became visible when the Latter-day Saints in Finland received wide attention related to the temple open house and dedication in the fall of 2006. Using this publicity as source material, I analyzed some otherness-promoting and otherness-diminishing discourses that were present. Depending on the actor and venue, the Finnish media discussed topics such as Americanisms, the temple's esoteric nature, and the relative normalcy of Finnish Latter-day Saints.<sup>23</sup>

I have also done research on the topic of LDS boundary maintenance, identity construction, and ambivalence toward mainstream Christianity in the late 1800s, using as source material public speeches of Mormon leaders in Utah. I used three different perspectives to analyze how these leaders thought about Christianness. The Latter-day Saints defined themselves as Christian in one sense of the mainstream Christian tradition but distanced themselves from it in another sense—in effect redefin-



ing the term “Christian.” Traditional Christians were also not seen as being Christians in the deepest sense, although their actions and attitudes were sometimes laudatory.<sup>24</sup>

### *The Study of Mormon Literature*

Mormonism has given rise to an extensive literature, including the Church’s canonized texts and religious writings by its members. Pertti Felin’s master’s thesis deals with the English-language text and style of the Book of Mormon, one of the Church’s books of scripture. His analysis includes the claims of the book’s divine origin, concluding that the text contains traits from cultures that used the Arabic, Egyptian, and Hebrew languages. Felin also found strong influence from the Bible. He concluded that the Book of Mormon in some respects ranks on a high level as literature, while in other respects it leaves much to be desired.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to religious literature, much fictional writing with a basis in Mormonism has appeared. Mormon author Orson Scott Card, for example, has received acclaim based on his works of science fiction and fantasy that implicitly contain elements related to Mormonism. Eva-Jo Jylhä wrote her master’s thesis on two of Card’s books, noting that Card does not make explicit connections with Mormonism and therefore achieved success outside the Mormon community as well.<sup>26</sup> Jylhä identifies several points of connection between the books and Mormon philosophy. She sees the books as evidence that Card used his religion to explore the potential future scenarios Mormonism makes possible and to present matters that he feels most strongly about, both on a conscious and on a subconscious level.

### *History*

Mormon studies throughout the world have traditionally taken a historical orientation. This approach is partly because the theology of Mormonism is strongly tied to its foundational events, even to the extent that the Church’s history could in a way be said to *be* its theology.<sup>27</sup> In Finland, Mormon studies have not been so clearly oriented to the history of Mormonism. Nonetheless, historical studies of Mormonism also play a significant part on the Finnish scene.

Part of the historical research has focused on Mormonism’s peculiar situation in Utah during the last half of the nineteenth century. The master’s thesis of Heikki Hannikainen charts the relationship between

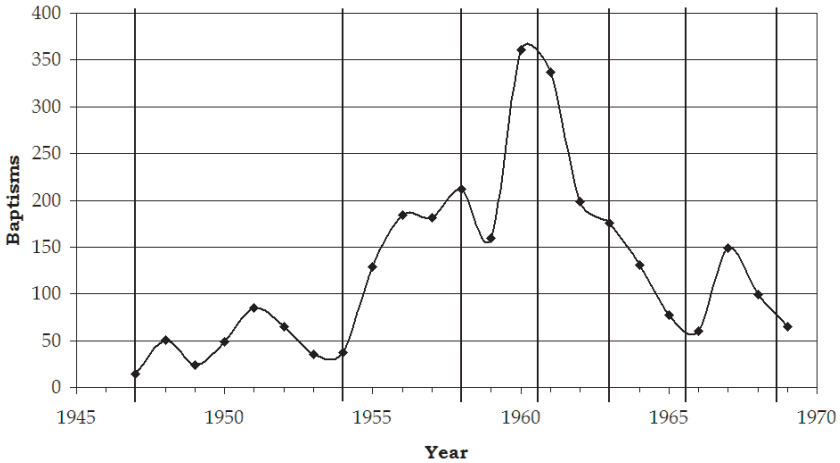
the United States and the Mormon Church during that period. The relationship became more complex because of, among other things, the Mormon practice of polygamy, although the real battle under the surface was the struggle for power between Church and state. Hannikainen summarizes the historical and legislative phases that eventually led to the cessation of polygamy in mainstream Mormonism.<sup>28</sup>

Another historical study conducted in Finland surveys the micro-filming of Finnish parish records funded by the Church immediately after World War II as part of the Mormon Church's genealogical program and to support the proxy ordinance work performed in behalf of the deceased in the Church's temples. Maria Ollila, the author of the thesis, used archival and newspaper material to describe, among other things, the phases of the filming project and the Lutheran Church's attitude toward the project.<sup>29</sup>

I have surveyed attitudes on the political left toward Mormons at the end of the Cold War in the 1980s. Some on the political left voiced suspicions that Mormons were spying on Finnish citizens and saw Mormon connections to the U.S. power structure.<sup>30</sup> I have also sought to chart the societal opposition that Mormonism has experienced in Finland since the mid-1800s. The opposition has mainly come from other religious actors in Finnish society and has partly had its source in specific individuals.<sup>31</sup>

Zachary R. Jones's master's thesis deals with Mormonism's nineteenth-century history in Russian-ruled Finland. This period has received comparatively little attention, and thus the understanding of early Mormon history in Finland has remained sketchy. Jones focuses on Mormon proselytizing efforts and on the relationship between Russian religious legislation and Mormonism in Finland at the time.<sup>32</sup> I have charted the emigration activities of the early Finnish Mormons, finding that, unlike other Nordic nations, emigration was a minor part of the Mormon experience in Finland.<sup>33</sup> This charting is part of my doctoral dissertation project, where I build on Jones's work to analyze the introduction of Mormonism to nineteenth-century Finnish society.

Another history, privately published, was written from a devotional perspective by Anna-Liisa Rinne. This work deals with Mormon history in Finland from 1856 to the beginning of the 1980s. In addition to a general overview, the book contains short histories of various Finnish Mormon



*Figure 2. Mormon baptisms in Finland, 1947–69.*

congregations.<sup>34</sup> It functions as an important general starting point for the interested researcher.

### *Proselytizing*

Latter-day Saints are usually recognized in Finland through their mostly American missionaries. Mormon missionary work in the country has been discussed from a number of perspectives. Jessica Björkman's master's thesis deals with missionaries working in Finland at the time of her inquiry in early 2000. She administered a survey to seventy missionaries and interviewed two of them. Among other topics, Björkman discusses their motivation for becoming missionaries, their impressions of Finns' attitudes toward them, and their impressions of how much the Finns know of Mormonism. According to Björkman, young Latter-day Saints become missionaries as a result of religious socialization and personal conviction. They feel that they are faced with much ignorance and prejudice in Finland.<sup>35</sup>

Another thesis submitted at Utah State University deals with LDS missionary work in Finland between 1947 and 1969. Among other topics, Kaija H. Penley sheds light on strategies of choice for American mission presidents in directing missionary activities in Finland. She used as her

sources the Finnish Mission's chronological history, statistics, and interviews with former missionaries. Figure 2 shows the number of converts for the period covered by the thesis.<sup>36</sup> The vertical lines which I have placed in the figure indicate changes of mission presidents, thus often implying when a change of approach in doing missionary work occurred.

Such line placement is, at best, approximate. How should one decide when the influence of the newly arrived mission president began to dominate over the former way of doing things? Other things can also affect the success of proselytizing. But in any case, some trends in baptismal numbers are apparent. According to Penley, different mission presidents emphasized different approaches at different times. Some presidents emphasized numerical growth, while others concentrated on the spiritual growth of the existing Finnish membership, with resultant dips in the number of new baptisms. It would be important to update this study and to bring it closer to modern days. A comparison with the techniques and success of other religious movements that proselytize in Finland would also shed interesting additional light.

Timo Kouki compares Mormon missionary work to general marketing strategies in his master's thesis. His work also has a sociological component, as it analyzes the conversion process and the leaving behind of the convert's previous faith tradition (if any). The thesis is based on surveys, interviews, and participant observation, and concludes that the LDS strategy of missionary work is largely equivalent to general business marketing methods. Most of the sampled converts came from families where they had been brought up with a positive attitude toward religion.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to these studies, another valuable source for the student of Mormon proselytizing in Finland is a 1997 privately printed devotional book that views missionary work mostly from the perspective of former mission presidents. The bilingual (Finnish and English) commemorative book includes, in addition to the memoirs of mission presidents, chronological historical information, and a fairly comprehensive listing of Mormon missionaries that have worked in Finland between 1946 and 1997.<sup>38</sup>

### *Gender Studies*

Men have a prominent role in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because priestly leadership and activity are so fully in their hands. Mormon views on priesthood are discussed in Alarik Corander's master's thesis, based on Church literature and participant observation.

Strictly speaking, the thesis does not discuss gender roles; but since only men can be ordained to priesthood office in the Mormon Church, the thesis can be said to also represent a study of the male gender role. According to the author, LDS men are in a special position both in this life and in the hereafter, and priesthood holders form a kind of core group in the Church.<sup>39</sup> Further Finnish research on the male experience of Mormonism is currently in progress through a thesis that deals with masculinity and male body representations in LDS teaching literature.<sup>40</sup>

The role of women in the Mormon Church has been discussed to some extent in Finnish research. For example, Anne Marie Talvio's master's thesis analyzes the purpose of a woman's existence and her duties from the Mormon perspective. Talvio uses Church literature, her own observations, and interviews as her source material. Despite the Church's strongly patriarchal nature, Talvio concludes that it also achieves equality between the sexes by, for example, placing men and women in a soteriological dependence relationship; according to the Latter-day Saints, neither man nor woman can separately fulfill the criteria for the highest exaltation.<sup>41</sup> In a bachelor's level work, Piia Metsä-Tokila has specifically examined Brigham Young's views on woman's position in family and society.<sup>42</sup>

### *Other Topics*

In addition to the topics discussed above, research in Finland has been conducted on the internalization of religion among Mormons, for example. The joint master's thesis of Arja Kuuva and Susanna Lindahl-Kaipia analyzes the effect of religion on the personality of individuals and the internalization of the distinguishing principles of their particular religion into their thought and experience. Sources for this study were Latter-day Saints in Turku, and the methods include a word association test and interviews.

According to the study, Mormons had not internalized their religion to the same extent as the comparison group, Jehovah's Witnesses, although they had done so more strongly than the control group representing the population at large. Latter-day Saints also reported somewhat more religious experiences than the Jehovah's Witnesses who were studied. The authors added that the Mormons' strong commitment to their religion and congregation and the resultant potential weakening of out-

side social ties may be partly responsible for negative attitudes from the rest of society.<sup>43</sup>

Research has also been conducted among Finnish Mormon youth, focusing on the construction and development of a religious worldview and commitment. Timo Metsä-Tokila and Jukka Lehtimäki found that youth actively involved with the Mormon Church most often question the values learned through religious socialization at about the age of seventeen, with some continuing their activity and others dropping out. In any case, the Church is seen as having a significant effect on the life of young Latter-day Saints, especially by providing a reference group that consists of other Mormon youth.<sup>44</sup>

One master's thesis currently in preparation deals with the Church Educational System (CES) of the Mormon Church. The thesis compares pedagogical methods suggested by the Church with teaching methods generally accepted in the field of pedagogy. The thesis also seeks to chart how the lay CES teachers in Finnish LDS congregations succeed in following the Church's suggested methods as they teach Latter-day Saint youth. Works of smaller scope have discussed Mormon Scouting activities in the Helsinki region and the future development of the Mormon Church in Finland.<sup>45</sup>

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Finland has not been studied much, comparatively speaking, it is fairly easy to suggest topics that would provide an improved and more nuanced understanding. Like other religious traditions, Mormonism can be used either as an independent topic or as a case study; both approaches have their value. The following research suggestions include examples of both.

First, it would be very beneficial to establish a profile of contemporary Finnish Latter-day Saints. It would be important to update previous studies that give some general understanding of membership composition. Some necessary questions to be answered include: What is the general education level of Finnish Mormons? What are their professions or trades? What are their religious backgrounds and those of their families of origin? Are these variables distributed along the lines of other actively religious people in Finland, or do they show distinctive trends? How orthodox and committed are Finnish Latter-day Saints in their religious practice and beliefs? Are Finnish Latter-day Saints' beliefs conservative or lib-

TABLE 1  
Mormon Church Membership Figures and Percentage of Growth in  
Finland, Sweden, and Worldwide, 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000	Growth 1980-2000
Finland	3,849	4,250	4,455	16%
Sweden	6,552	7,850	8,595	31%
Worldwide	4,639,822	7,761,000	11,069,000	139%

\*Information for 1990 is missing from the *Deseret News Almanac*, and I have therefore used the average of the membership figures for 1989 and 1991 for Finland and Sweden.

eral within the spectrum of Mormon thought, and why? Why do Finnish Mormons disaffiliate from the Church?

A positive aspect to such investigations would be that data for some topics exist in some of the previously described studies. In addition, similar data exist for other countries and religions, and comparative investigations can prove to be illuminating.<sup>46</sup> Such a profile could also serve as a springboard for further Finland-specific studies related to topics such as Mormon families, bringing up Mormon children, drug abuse among Mormon youth, mental health, the impact of the missionary experience on Finnish Mormons, and the position of LDS women at home and in the Church.

A matter that has occupied some researchers is the growth of the Mormon Church and the reasons for it. Although official membership numbers do not address the complicated question of real growth and are, by themselves, even misleading,<sup>47</sup> some have held Mormonism up as an example of a religion that is growing strongly despite general secularization.<sup>48</sup> The worldwide growth of the Latter-day Saints has been numerically impressive, although growth in Finland has been virtually nonexistent for a long time. Some membership statistics for the Church in Finland, neighboring Sweden, and the world as a whole are provided in Table 1.<sup>49</sup>

The differences are conspicuous, and Finland as a country has its own reasons for slow growth.<sup>50</sup> In any case, it would be enlightening to study more deeply the reasons for the difference in growth between Finland and Sweden, since they are quite similar in many ways. It would per-

haps be even more fruitful to compare the Mormon growth figures for the two countries with the corresponding figures of other churches, both in terms of recruitment and in terms of children born to Mormon families.

Another broad topic is Mormonism's public image in Finland. It would be especially enlightening to study the Mormon interface with the surrounding society and with the media, and to compare the results with prior insights on the issue of new religious movements and minority religions.<sup>51</sup> What factors have contributed to the public image of the Mormons in Finland? What has the Mormon Church done or not done to affect its image, and how has the Finnish media treated the Latter-day Saints as one of the religious minorities active in the country?

It would similarly be interesting to study the categorization problem from the Finnish perspective. What arguments have been used in Finnish discourse to classify the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as Christian, Christian-based, non-Christian, or as a new religious movement, and why? Depending on emphasis and point of view, Mormonism as an institution and as a religious philosophy can plausibly be said to include elements having "family resemblances" with each of these categories. Although this categorization is not in itself important from an analytical point of view, it has an effect on the way Finnish people think of the Mormons and thus has an effect on the Church's situation in Finland. It also opens interesting windows into the self-understanding of Finnish Latter-day Saints and into their understanding of other Finnish churches.

The final research ideas suggested here concern the concept of Mormonism among sectarian and secular anti-cult movements. The high-profile deconversion of two Latter-day Saints at the end of the 1970s, for example, has strongly influenced Finnish anti-cult activities. Accordingly, the Latter-day Saints have, sporadically, been dealt with negatively in public settings. For example, anti-cult presentations in schools and public gatherings and articles in newspapers and magazines have likely had an effect on the image of Mormonism. However, the issue has not been studied in sufficient depth.

Mormonism is, of course, not the only target of anti-cult criticism; many other churches and movements have received their share of negative publicity. It would be instructive to study the differences in anti-cult rhetoric when it is focused on Mormonism on the one hand, or on, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Church of Scientology on the other.



### Primary Sources Related to Finnish Mormonism

Researchers have at their disposal a fairly large number of sources in which to search for answers to questions such as those presented above. A large collection of sources related to Finnish Mormonism is found outside Finland, at the Church Historical Library and Archives of the Church's Family and Church History Department in Salt Lake City. The library and archive are the main repository of archival material on Mormonism from all over the world. They contain regional and congregational histories, published books and pamphlets, and original handwritten documents from the early days of Mormonism. There has been and still is some controversy over the archive's openness policies; but except for some limited categories of materials (i.e., financial records, minutes of meetings of the leading quorums and auxiliaries, etc.), an extremely large amount of valuable material is freely accessible to researchers.

The library and the archive also contain the most comprehensive collection of material on Finnish Mormonism. A chronological history, for example, includes entries dating from 1860 onward. The archive also contains numerous interviews of Finnish Mormons and missionaries who served in Finland. In addition, there are mission reports, correspondence, official ecclesiastical records, books, pamphlets, etc. Some of the material on Finland is not directly available to researchers due to reasons of confidentiality. Requests for the use of these materials are handled on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to this material abroad, Finnish researchers have two geographically more easily accessible repositories of primary source material. They have scarcely been used at all for scholarly studies and are thus important new resources. One very valuable archive is located in the basement of the Hämeenlinna LDS meetinghouse. It was founded in 1999, when LDS congregations and individuals around Finland were asked to begin sending in historical material that they had accumulated over the years. Among other items, the archive contains hundreds of newspaper clippings related to Mormonism from 1946 to the present, correspondence, congregational records, ecclesiastical reports, oral history interviews, and formerly used lesson manuals. The collection of the Finnish Church magazines *Valkeus* (1949–98) and *Liahona* (1999– ) is also an important source for the researcher. Additionally, a process is under way to make some of the Finland-related materials of the Salt Lake City archives available in Hämeenlinna.<sup>52</sup>

Another important archival source is at the LDS mission office in Helsinki. Perhaps the most valuable resource housed there is a detailed multi-volume and multi-binder history of events in the Finnish Mormon mission since the 1940s. This history contains information about how Mormon missionary work has been directed in Finland, some congregational histories, and information on what has happened in different cities where the Mormons have proselytized. In addition, the office archive also contains conversion stories, early newspaper clippings, and missionary rosters.

The downside to these two Finnish archives is that their holdings have not been fully organized and catalogued. This often means that the interested researcher must engage in some digging to find the needed source. In any case, it is highly important to note that these archives exist and that they contain a great deal of next to untouched material for a scholar who wants to study the Mormon experience in Finland.

One should also not forget local Mormon congregations that have, at least according to the studies surveyed in this article, been generally receptive to students engaging in participant observation, conducting interviews, and administering questionnaires.

At least one more Finnish resource is likewise relevant. The University of Helsinki is currently creating a "Historical Newspaper Library," which means that it is digitizing all Finnish newspapers from 1771 to 1890.<sup>53</sup> Scheduled to be finished in 2008, the database of the newspapers processed has been searchable on the internet by keyword for some time. One can, for example, type in "Mormon," and the system will search for newspapers and articles containing that word. Preliminary searches have turned up a very large number of articles in the Finnish and Swedish languages. A couple of examples of early newspaper mentions of Mormonism are given below in Figure 3, dealing with the activities of two early Mormon missionaries to Finland, the Swedes Alexander S. Hedberg and Leonard D. Nyberg.

The newspapers contain many different types of information related to Mormons: missionary activities in Finland, Mormon activities in Scandinavia or elsewhere in the world, general descriptions of the Mormon religion, etc. These newspapers are a highly valuable source from the point of view of the Finnish study of religion. Allusions to the Latter-day Saints in Finnish nineteenth-century sources have been available in the past on an extremely limited basis; but these sources, now easily available,

— Gräs mormonilaisuuden saarnaaja Hedberg on kuten Folkw. tietää, saapunut Helsinkiin Khotista ja myy-sentelee pikkukirjasia, jotka sisältävät mormonein opinkappaleet ja joisia muun muosia puolestetaan myöskin moni-awoisuutta. Hänen sanotaan Turussa ja Siiposissa saaneen ujeita fielu- ja werkoosia.

Meidän tietääksemme on moinen us-  
toon-käännyttäjäni toimi Suomessa tiel-  
letty.

Figure 3. Newspaper notices about Mormonism from *Hämäläinen*, November 5, 1884 (left, in Finnish) and *Östra Finland*, September 21, 1888 (right, in Swedish). Source: Historical Newspaper Library, Helsinki University Library.

open up a completely new window on Finnish reactions to Mormonism during its early years in that country. What makes the matter even more interesting is that Finland did not assure freedom of religion during this period. Thus, the early reactions to the Mormons can sometimes seem rather curious to the modern reader.

### Conclusion

Like many other religions, Mormonism in Finland is an interesting research topic. First, although some studies on the Mormons exist, the research field is largely uncharted. Disparate studies of Finnish Mormonism provide only limited peeks into a large room through multiple keyholes. Much work remains to assess the place of Mormonism among Finnish religious and cultural influences and to more fully understand the internal dynamics operating within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Finland.

Second, religion in Finland is very different from religion in the United States, the homeland of Mormonism and the strongest cultural influence on the Church's operating procedures. Whereas the United States is strongly pluralistic, Finland is dominated by the culturally, albeit not religiously, strong Evangelical Lutheran national church. This condition clearly affects how smaller religious movements like Mormonism are viewed. In this respect, studies of Mormonism in Finland can be fruitfully

compared with similar studies from other nations. They will provide an interesting window into cultural successes or tensions affecting the Mormon Church from both the inside and the outside.

Finally, one of the most promising aspects of future research is an abundance of material related to Finland. Due to a religious mandate, the Latter-day Saints have a penchant for meticulous record-keeping. The researcher of Mormonism will therefore not easily exhaust available sources. In addition, those sources are largely untouched and unused, thus providing an interesting and fruitful field of discovery for scholars. To borrow from Mormon parlance, it could well be said that “the field is white already to harvest” (D&C 4:4).

### Notes

1. Throughout this paper I use “Mormonism,” “Mormon,” “LDS,” and “Latter-day Saint(s)” interchangeably to refer to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members. More broadly and accurately, the term “Mormonism” of course refers to all faith traditions descended from Joseph Smith’s “Church of Christ,” as his movement was originally called.

2. For a review of some of the most recent literature, see Irén Annus, “Review Essay: New Studies in Mormonism,” *Nova Religio* 9, no. 4 (May 2006): 98–111.

3. For the views on some of these issues by a non-Mormon doctoral student writing his dissertation on Mormonism, see Seth Perry, “An Outsider Looks In at Mormonism,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 22 (February 3, 2006): B9–B11.

4. The matter is discussed, for example, in David M. Morris’s introductory comments, “The History of British Latter-day Saints from 1837” at <http://www.mormonhistory.org> (accessed January 5, 2008).

5. On the idea of colonization applied to Mormonism, see for example Walter E. A. van Beek, “Mormon Europeans or European Mormons? An ‘Afro-American’ View of Religious Colonization,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 3–36.

6. Alarik Corander, “Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkko,” in *Aktuella religiösa rörelser i Finland*, edited by Nils G. Holm et al. (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1981), 311–21.

7. Harri Heino, “Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkko,” in Heino, *Mihin Suomi uskoo* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1984), 148–54; and Heino, “Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkko,” in Heino, *Mihin Suomi tänään uskoo* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1997), 181–88.

8. I thank those individuals who have brought some of the literature to my attention.

9. Taisto Huttunen, "Mormonien nykyinen oppi" (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1965), Niina Uljas, "Korotuksen tie: Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon käsitys elämän tarkoituksesta" (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1988), and Arja Kuuva & Susanna Lindahl-Kaipia, "Katsaus Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon ja Jehovan todistajain historiaan ja oppiin" (Turku: University of Turku, 1990).

10. Kirsi Lamminpää, "Jatkuvan ilmoituksen periaate Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkossa" (Turku: University of Turku, 2002).

11. Heikki Räisänen, "Joseph Smith und die Bibel: Die Leistung des mormonischen Propheten in neuer Beleuchtung," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 109, no. 2 (1984): 81–92; Räisänen, "Joseph Smith ja Raamattu," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 89, no. 4 (1984): 287–94; and Räisänen, "A Bible-Believer Improves the Bible: Joseph Smith's Contribution to Exegesis," in Räisänen, *Marcion, Muhammad and the Mahatma: Exegetical Perspectives on the Encounter of Cultures and Faiths* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 153–69, 273–77.

12. Pekka Roto, Terho Lehtimäki, and Sari Suurinkeroinen, "Mormonien käsitykset elämäntavoista ja terveydestä," *Suomen Lääkärilehti* 55, no. 19 (2000): 2125–28.

13. Kim Östman, "Nykyajan kristillistä esoteriaa: Katsaus mormonismiin temppelitradiitioon," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 111, no. 5 (2006): 430–40.

14. Elisa Mikkola, "Mormonin kirja—tulkinnan ongelmia" (Turku: University of Turku, 1998), and Leila Kvist, "MAP-kirkon pyhät lähteet ja niiden käyttö Turun seurakunnan sakramenttikokouksissa" (Turku: University of Turku, 1974).

15. Ann-Catrin Kaski, "Jesu Kristi Kyrka av Sista Dagars Heliga: En religionssociologisk studie av mormonkyrkan med särskild hänsyn till förhållandena i Finland" (Turku: Åbo Akademi University, 1984).

16. Hellä Kylmälä, "Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkko Suomessa ja sen asema suomalaisten lahkojen typologiassa" (Turku: University of Turku, 1970).

17. Risto Kurra, "Mormonikäännyminen ja mormonismien kuva Suomessa" (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1971).

18. Elmer T. Clark, *The Psychology of Religious Awakening* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

19. Sinikka Saarela, "Mormonikäätymys Suomessa" (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 1987).

20. Eija Taskinen, "Oulun pyhät: Oulun Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon piirissä tapahtuvan sosialisatioprosessin tarkastelua" (Oulu: University of Oulu, 1994).

21. See Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh, *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

22. Vesa-Petri Lehto, "Uskonnollisesta yhteisöstä eroaminen uskonto-tieteellisenä ongelmana: Tutkimus ex-mormonien eroamiskertomuksista" (Turku: University of Turku, 2000).

23. Kim B. Östman, "'The Other' in the Limelight: One Perspective on the Publicity Surrounding the New Latter-day Saint Temple in Finland," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 40, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 71–106. Another study dealing with temple open houses, discussing how "open" they are, is my "Esotericism made Exoteric? Insider and Outsider Perspectives on the 2006 Mormon Temple Public Open House in Espoo, Finland," in *Western Esotericism*, edited by Tore Ahlbäck (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, forthcoming).

24. Kim Östman, "Kristillisen identiteetin ongelma varhaisen mormonismien aatemaailmassa," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 112, no. 2 (2007): 123–34. The article will appear in English as "The Problem of Christian Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century Mormon Thought," in an anthology of Joseph Smith Summer Seminar papers, edited by Richard Lyman Bushman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, forthcoming).

25. Pertti Felin, "Aspects of the Style and Language of the Book of Mormon" (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1970).

26. Eva-Jo Jylhä, "Orson Scott Card's Exploration of the Doctrine and Culture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in *Ender's Game* and *The Tales of Alvin Maker*" (Oulu: University of Oulu, 1998).

27. Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation: Force, Grace and Glory* (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2000), 11.

28. Heikki Hannikainen, "Moniavioisuus Utahin historiassa" (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1991).

29. Maria Ollila, "Käsin kopioinnista mormonien rahoittamaan mikrofilmaukseen: Suomalaisten kirkonkirjojen jäljennystyö 1924–1955" (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2003).

30. Kim B. Östman, "The Mormon Espionage Scare and Its Coverage in Finland, 1982–84," *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 82–117. An earlier version of the study was presented as "Boys, Boys, Spies?"

Mormon Missionaries as Suspected American Agents in Finland,” Sunstone Symposium, August 2006, Salt Lake City.

31. I presented a preliminary version of this study as “An International Perspective: Opposition to Mormonism in Finland, 1845–2006” at the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) conference, August 2006, in Sandy, Utah.

32. Zachary R. Jones, “Conflict amid Conversion: Mormon Proselytizing in Russian Finland, 1860–1914” (Williamsburg, Va.: College of William & Mary, 2007). Part of the work was presented as “Conflict and Conversion: Mormon Proselytizing in Russian Finland, 1860–1903” at the Mormon History Association annual conference, May 2007, in Salt Lake City.

33. Kim Östman, “Suomesta Siioniin: Mormonisiirtolaisuus Utahiin 1800-luvulla,” *Siirtolaisuus–Migration* 34, no. 4 (2007): 12–19. I presented the original version of the study as “From Finland to Zion: Mormon Emigration to Utah in the 1800s” at the Nordic Migration: Past and Present conference, October 2007, in Turku, Finland.

34. Anna-Liisa Rinne, *Kristuksen kirkko Suomessa: Kertomus Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon juurtumisesta tähän maahan* (Turku: privately published, 1986).

35. Jessica Björkman, “Jesu Kristi Kyrka av Sista Dagars Heliga och missionstjänsten i Finland” (Turku: Åbo Akademi University, 2000).

36. Kaija H. Penley, “Leadership of Mormon Missionary Efforts in Finland and Its Influence on Conversion Rates in the Finnish Mission, 1947–1969” (Logan: Utah State University, 1994).

37. Timo Kouki, “Turun MAP-kirkko ja sen lähetystyö” (Turku: University of Turku, 1980).

38. Don C. Woodward, ed., *Muistamme–We Remember* (Salt Lake City: Henry A. Matis Family Society, 1997).

39. Alarik Corander, “Palautettu valtuus: Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon käsitys pappeudesta” (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1981).

40. Oscar Ortiz-Nieminen, “Patriarkkana ikuisuuden performanssissa: Maskuliinisuuden ja miehen ruumiillisuuden rakentuminen Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon opetusteksteissä” (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, forthcoming).

41. Anne Marie Talvio, “Naisen asema Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkossa” (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1988). Two other bachelor’s-level studies not mentioned in my text are Mirjami Airio-Murola, “Naisen tehtävät MAP-kirkossa: Yhden vaikuttajan yksilöpsyko-

logista tarkastelua” (Turku: University of Turku, 1974) and Carita Elenij and Paula Kulola, “Naisen tehtävät Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkossa” (Turku: University of Turku, 1990).

42. Piia Metsä-Tokila, “Vuosien 1844–1877 mormonikirkon johtajan Brigham Youngin tulkintoja naisen asemasta avioliitossa, perheessä, työssä, koulussa ja yhteiskunnassa” (Turku: University of Turku, 2004).

43. Arja Kuuva and Susanna Lindahl-Kaipia, “Uskonnon sisäistymisen ilmeneminen Jehovan todistajan ja Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon jäsenen ajatus- ja kokemusmaailmassa: Vertaileva tutkimus Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon Turun seurakunnan ja Jehovan todistajien Turun eteläisen seurakunnan jäsennäytteen välillä” (Turku: University of Turku, 1992).

44. Timo Metsä-Tokila and Jukka Lehtimäki, “Vähemmistöuskontoon kuuluvan nuoren hengellisen vakaumuksen rakentuminen ja aikuistuminen,” 2002, unpublished manuscript in my possession.

45. Maija Tammi, “Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen kirkon partiotoiminta pääkaupunkiseudulla” (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1991) and Mikko Airtto, “Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkon kehittyminen Suomessa vuoteen 2015 mennessä” (Rovaniemi: University of Lapland, 2004).

46. For a profile of American Latter-day Saints, see Tim B. Heaton, Stephen Bahr, and Cardell K. Jacobson, eds., *A Statistical Profile of Mormons: Health, Wealth, and Social Life* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004). For a profile of the religious thought and practice of Finns in general, see Kimmo Kääriäinen, Kati Niemelä, and Kimmo Ketola, *Religion in Finland: Decline, Change and Transformation of Finnish Religiosity* (Tampere: Church Research Institute, 2005).

47. Rick Phillips, “Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism,” *Nova Religio* 10, no. 1 (August 2006): 52–68.

48. See, for example, Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism*, edited by Reid L. Neilson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

49. I have gathered membership numbers for Finland and Sweden from the 1982, 1991–92, 1993–94, and 2003 editions of the *Deseret News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News), and worldwide membership numbers from Stark, *The Rise of Mormonism*, 144–45.

50. See Kääriäinen, Niemelä, and Ketola, *Religion in Finland*, for a discussion of these reasons.

51. See Jeffrey Kaplan, ed., *Beyond the Mainstream: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in Finland, Estonia, and Russia* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature So-



ciety, 2000), 125–330 for scattered insights about this matter from the Finnish perspective. The general sociological literature about new religious movements, and their interface with society is extensive.

52. Address queries about the archive to Pirkko Lahti {pirkko.lahti@luukku.com}, the LDS Church's historian in Finland.

53. *The Finnish Historical Newspaper Library 1771–1890*, Digital Collections, Helsinki University Library, <http://digi.lib.helsinki.fi> (accessed January 5, 2008).