

# The Trial of the French Mission

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SHORT, SOLID, BULL-NECKED ELDER WILLIAM TUCKER, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, would grip your hand firmly and ask earnestly, "How are you, Brother?" (Harvey, April 1986) Elder Loftin Harvey, Jr., several months senior to Tucker in the mission, at first thought this new acquaintance was simply odd. Later, he, along with many others, would come to respect and admire Tucker, and finally their paths would be drawn together before a Church tribunal in which the course of Harvey's life would forever be altered.

To mission leaders and missionaries alike, Elder Tucker had the qualities of an ideal leader for proselyting. In September 1957 Harold W. Lee, Tucker's first mission president, pointed him out to another newly arrived missionary, Marlene Wessel, and said, "If you want to be a good missionary and baptize, watch Elder Tucker" (Owens 1986). Frank Willardsen, a fellow missionary, remembers his piercing eyes and aura of charisma (June 1986). In person, he was quiet, soft-spoken, gentle, and confident (Norton 1979, 2; Harvey, April 1986). In public, he was dynamic and forceful. He was well-read in Church doctrine and engaged in missionary work with a gusto that caught the attention of the whole mission.

Early in 1958 Tucker became the second counselor in the French Mission presidency, and, in the absence of a first counselor, the only assistant to Mission President Milton Christensen. Tucker traveled in the mission frequently, conducting study classes with missionary elders, preaching over the pulpit to the French members, and performing the diurnal labors of tracting and contacting with individual missionaries. He was widely known and admired.

Yet unseen dissonance belied an orthodox demeanor. Tucker harbored many unresolved questions about the Church. A convert to Mormonism in California at age fifteen, he had immersed himself in a study of its history and

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doctrine. Intrigued by the former practice of polygamy and the many “mysteries” mentioned but not clearly defined in the statements of early Church authorities, he began to develop his own divergent conclusions and to question the teachings of modern Church authorities (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981, 63). His unorthodox notions, however, did not preclude his accepting a mission call.

In France he shared his conclusions with others. Conducting a mission within a mission, he sifted through the elders and sisters looking for his own harvest of receptive minds. Many began to credit his teachings above those of Church authorities, and to the many young missionaries who were attracted to him as a paragon of proselyting, he opened a Pandora’s box of doubt.

The matter culminated in September 1958, when all French missionaries crossed the channel to attend the dedication of the London Temple. Alarmed Church authorities interviewed the entire contingent to determine their allegiance. Many repented, but nine were excommunicated after a trial that was without precedent in the history of LDS missionary work.

The nine were not all Tucker’s confederates. In particular, Harvey, never party to the lengthy doctrinal trysts with Tucker or his inner circle, unexpectedly found himself sitting with the defendants on that September day in London. While the formal trial lasted less than a day, Harvey’s inner trial of faith and testimony continued for decades.

The story of Loftin Harvey, Jr., is not, then, the story of the French apostasy. Rather, it is a study of testimony. While faithfully serving his mission, he was inadvertently entrapped in the web of Tucker’s apostasy. His story raises questions of significance to those considering the nature of faith and adherence to that faith.

To understand the whirlpool of events that swept Harvey toward excommunication we must trace in more detail Tucker’s key role in creating the trial of faith in France. In Salt Lake City, while en route to France, Tucker had obtained an interview with Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith, known as a doctrinal authority. Tucker had not been satisfied with the interview (Chard 1965, 114). However, Elder Smith apparently had not found him unworthy to continue on his mission, nor had Tucker declined to continue on his way.

Tucker arrived in the French Mission in October 1956 and was assigned to work in Geneva, Switzerland. Many French missionaries were stationed in Belgium or French-speaking Switzerland, awaiting visas permitting them to enter France itself.

Elder Tucker was initiated into missionary work with a practical joke. Left alone at the missionary quarters, he was visited by Marilyn Lamborn, one of the sister missionaries, posing as a streetwalker. She tried several times to solicit his business. He refused at every point and, when the other missionaries returned, innocently shared his relief with them at his escape from temptation. Everyone hooted at the outrageous prank and this obviously high-principled elder’s discomfiture (Harvey, Sept. 1986). Tucker’s thinking may have been deviant, but he was not unscrupulous.

Tucker remained in Geneva four months. In February 1957, he was transferred to Marseille on the southern coast of France with David Shore

as a companion. In Shore he found a kindred spirit. These two like-minded elders intensively prayed, fasted, studied, and in other ways actively sought spiritual growth. Their devotion and energy was unusual in the French mission in 1957 and attracted attention mission-wide.

Proselyting had never been easy in the French Mission. Full-scale missionary work dated from the end of the First World War, yet in 1957, 130 missionaries baptized only 110 converts and a mere thirty of those baptisms occurred in France proper. Statistically, France occupied the basement compared to other European missions (Norton 1979, 1).

Missionaries, who respond ebulliently to success, are equally disheartened by failure. Morale was low. Discouraged seniors would at times ditch their junior companions and go to movies or other diversions (Norton 1979, 1). In some cases, missionaries diverted their attention from preaching to romancing. Other missionaries simply lay in bed late, neglected their work, and were generally frivolous, light-minded, and unspiritual (Wright 1963, 122). When word spread that missionaries in Marseille were fasting, praying, prophesying, and baptizing, the aspirations of others began to revive (Norton 1979, 2).

The key word in Marseille was "preparation," and missionaries there pursued preparation to an extreme unseen elsewhere in the mission. While the mission standard was to proselyte forty-five hours a week and to study eight to ten hours, the Marseille elders were studying sixty to seventy hours and proselyting six to eight hours. In their preaching and discussion, they sought to emulate a style, attributed to early Church missionaries, of more decisive and visionary discourse. The approach appeared to be effective. Attendance at Church meetings rose dramatically, and more baptisms were registered in Marseille than elsewhere in the mission (Norton 1979, 2-3). Meanwhile a new mission president, Milton Christensen, had arrived in France in November 1957. Before departing, President Lee recommended Tucker to Christensen as a prospective counselor.

Ironically, while trying to convert others, Tucker continued to sway from his own conversion. Even prior to his mission, he had concluded that the Church had erred in abolishing polygamy (Wright 1963, 121). At some point he developed aberrant views regarding priesthood authority, the guidance of the spirit, the temple garment, and the Word of Wisdom.

Tucker's Marseille companion, David Shore, proved to be a fellow traveler in many of these beliefs, including the necessity of practicing polygamy (Chard 1965, 114). He and Shore sustained their mutual discord through correspondence. After Tucker was transferred to work in Herstal, Belgium, in October 1957, Tucker's companion in Herstal, Ron Peterson, remembers that Tucker would rave about "epistles" from Shore, calling them "spiritually colossal" (Peterson, April 1986). Shore left the mission in January 1958, promising to send Tucker any literature he could find that was consonant with their beliefs.

Tucker's reputation continued to blossom in Herstal. He reinvigorated the branch, attendance rising dramatically as it had done in Marseille (Harvey, June 1986). Others spoke of him as "setting the French mission on fire," and

his claim that he received revelation to guide his work rapidly became the talk of the mission (Wright 1963, 122). It was at this juncture in February 1958, sixteen months into his mission, that Mission President Milton Christensen called him to serve as his second counselor. The president commented in the mission journal, 6 February 1958, "The Lord truly blessed me in the selection of This Elder, who is very strong in the Gospel and who is loved by all the missionaries. I feel that together we will be able to accomplish a great deal in the French Mission."

Prospects for mission success never seemed better than in 1958. In the spring, French language editions of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price were published. Word spread throughout the mission that the nighttime of the French Mission was over. New hope and enthusiasm was matched by an upsurge in converts presaging the possibility of more than 200 baptisms within the year, twice the number than in any previous year since the organization of the mission (Chard 1965, 112).

An elder who proselyted door-to-door with Elder Tucker after his appointment as counselor recalls: "His door approach was firm and respectful. Lessons were simple, clear, forceful, and adapted to the special needs of each individual contact" (Norton 1979, 3). This public performance could not help but gain the confidence of his fellow missionaries. In approaching them to gauge their susceptibility to his private beliefs, he worked clandestinely, not intending, it would appear, to cause defection from the Church but to lay the groundwork for what he perceived as needed Church reforms.

Much of Tucker's influence was definitely for the good. He was a firm advocate of the Word of Wisdom. He worked hard and his strong recommendation for spirituality in missionary work inspired many to greater exertion in their own callings (Wright 1963, 122). Juna Abbott, for example, had been an airline stewardess. As a sister missionary, she remained cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and excessively concerned with make-up and appearances. Strongly impressed with the teachings of the Tucker group, she changed dramatically, becoming simple, austere, and studious (Harvey, June 1986, Sept. 1986).

Tucker attracted various confederates, one of whom was J. Bruce Wakeham from Duarte, California, and a member of the same Pasadena Stake as Tucker. He and Wakeham not only seemed cast in the same mold, but Tucker effusively praised his cohort, on one occasion pointing to Wakeham and exclaiming, "Now, there is a prophet of God!" (Peterson, March 1986)

A second adherent was Stephen Silver. Appointed as Tucker's companion after he became a counselor, he absorbed Tucker's teachings on a daily basis. According to one acquaintance, Tucker's teaching profoundly affected Silver's personality. Previously fun-loving, cheerful, and energetic, he became somber, pious, and reticent (Hart 1987).

A third confederate, the ethereal and elusive Daniel Jordan, struck others as extreme in his attitudes and action. He refused to eat white bread or chocolate. He would pray in the open, looking straight up in the air. He kept a pencil and pad by his bedside to record his dreams, which he considered revela-

tions. Rather than proselyte, he generally devoted himself to study. His abnormal behavior and aloofness at times frightened others (Turner 1986).

Tucker gathered these three elders to the Paris mission center in March 1958. During the next several months, all four continuously traveled the mission publicly proclaiming the gospel but privately propounding their own special doctrine. They would team up with individual missionaries during the day and in the evening conduct study and testimony sessions.

Usually, they would test a missionary's receptiveness by stating an apostate principle (Peterson 1986). What came next would depend upon how the elder reacted. If he was confused and quizzical, they might pursue the topic to bring him around. If he denounced their principle and appeared to be knowledgeable, they would drop the subject.

One prospective adherent was Ronald M. Jarvis. Arriving in the French Mission in late 1957, serious-minded and dedicated, he had come on his mission with a testimony of the gospel but, according to a post-mission interview, also determined that he would follow his testimony if it conflicted with the direction of Church authorities (in Wright 1963, 123). He was displeased to find some missionaries shiftless and inattentive to their spiritual development. He was equally disgruntled with what he regarded as a lack of spiritual vitality among the local members. Critical of the mission as a whole, he was thus disposed to be greatly impressed by the energetic work of Tucker and his associates.

Elder Jarvis met Elder Shore, Tucker's Marseille companion, as Shore was leaving the mission field. Jarvis reflected in his journal, "Never have I met a man who more completely won my respect and confidence. My entire soul reached out for instruction and he imparted quite a bit to me concerning the wearing of the Priesthood garments and concerning the spiritual value of the Word of Wisdom" (in Wright 1963, 60-61). Jarvis was in Paris from January until August 1958, constantly exposed to Tucker and his adherents, and by that April he had become totally absorbed in the movement.

While Tucker taught the primacy of seeking the Spirit for guidance in conducting missionary work, he privately went out of bounds, encouraging the elders to discount the current Church leaders' teachings in favor of doctrines culled from sources such as the *Journal of Discourses*, a compilation of sermons by early Church authorities (Silver 1961, 2). He taught that some General Authorities lived polygamously in secret (Peterson, March 1986) and that the Church proper had collectively apostatized from the principles on which it had been founded. He decried the unquestioning acceptance of tradition and urged immediate reformation. Jarvis commented in his journal: "The events of the next few years are going to try this church from the bottom to the top and I fear much persecution from the members of the church who are founded on tradition rather than real testimony" (in Wright 1963, 124-25).

Confronted by Tucker's beliefs, many elders now considered issues they had not encountered, much less resolved, before their missions. Elders with little Church experience were particularly susceptible to Tucker's visionary teachings. Caught up in his enthusiasm and conviction, they were perhaps

unprepared to determine whether or not the spirit Tucker instilled in them was the true spirit of missionary work by which they should guide their own efforts.

Missionaries also did not always realize that in considering Tucker's ideas they were courting apostasy. Marilyn Lamborn, the sister missionary who had first met Tucker in Geneva, later admitted: "I was just thrilled with my new knowledge. I'd write home and say these beautiful doors were being opened to me. I guess my letters must have sounded crazy. I really didn't think I would ever have to give up my beloved church. I didn't know I was headed in that direction" (in Bradlee and Van Atta 1981, 65).

Elder Tucker held great sway over the entire Paris corps of elders as well as many others throughout the mission. One estimate is that a third of the 130 missionaries in the French Mission eventually came to be in sympathy with Tucker (Norton 1979, 1). According to another source about thirty of the missionaries could have been considered firm believers (Cummings, April 1987). Under his influence, missionaries began to study rather than proselyte, and some began to wear only the "old style" temple garments (Wright 1963, 126).

Loftin Harvey, as yet unaffected by the Tucker faction and their teachings, was transferred to Marseille in the winter of 1957-58 just as Tucker was leaving for Herstal. It was in Marseille that Harvey first indirectly encountered Tucker's doctrines. Harvey was the senior companion of J. Bruce Wakeham, Tucker's California double who in spring would be appointed to join Tucker's Paris group as a traveling elder. That winter Harvey and Wakeham worked in Marseille with Elders Bob Johnson and his junior companion, Wayne Cheney. During a testimony meeting of the four elders and sisters Marilyn Lamborn and Wanda Scott, Cheney professed belief in the Adam-God theory, a doctrine no longer taught in the Church. Johnson, his senior companion, objected vehemently. Before the confrontation came to blows, as Harvey suspected it might, he took control of the situation, trading junior companions with Johnson until tempers settled. In the meantime, Johnson, an ardent admirer of Joseph Fielding Smith, wrote to him concerning the incident (Harvey, April 1986).

Word eventually got back to President Christensen that something was amiss in Marseille. In April 1958, he sent Tucker to investigate. Tucker made several visits in April and May, each time assuring the president that the situation was in hand and that the missionaries had been counseled not to study things that they could not understand. The president did not yet realize that the person assigned to resolve the problem was the source of the problem.

Having preceded Tucker into the mission field by four months, Harvey had never been openly approached to share in Tucker's teachings, even by Wakeham in Marseille. Favorable reports and personal acquaintance reversed his initial negative impression of Tucker. In fact, Harvey was deeply moved when, during a testimony meeting, Tucker called him forward to speak on the principle of fasting. Harvey had been fasting secretly and took this request to be more than a coincidence (Harvey, April 1986). Yet Harvey had no doctrinal ties to the Tucker faction.

In May, Harvey was transferred from Marseille to Mulhouse and in August to Nancy. Little did he anticipate that the Adam-God controversy in Marseille was the warning breeze before the tempest.

While attention was focused on Marseille, the affair smoldered more dangerously in Paris, emitting fumes that would soon expose its presence to Church authorities. Elder Shore, having returned to Utah, eventually made good on his promise to Tucker. He perused Salt Lake bookstores and among other items, purchased *Priesthood Expounded*, a doctrinal polemic presenting beliefs held by the Church of the Firstborn. This church, organized by the LeBaron family in Mexico, claimed priesthood authority superior to that found in the LDS Church and also propounded the necessity of practicing polygamy. Tucker was very impressed with the book's arguments (Silver 1961, 5). He and Sister Lamborn typed excerpts from the literature and that July circulated them to other dissident missionaries (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981, 66).

The serious-minded new Paris recruit, Ron Jarvis, requested more information directly from Ervil LeBaron in Mexico. It arrived in late July. In the meantime, Harvey Harper, a missionary from Bakersfield, California, was appointed as his senior companion. The two jointly considered the material. Jarvis recorded in his journal, 2 August 1958, their efforts to receive guidance:

Upon deciding to retire last night we were discussing plural marriage, and upon Brother Harper's suggestion, we read the 132nd Section of *The Doctrine and Covenants* and then asked the Lord for a testimony of that principle. We took turns praying and after being plagued a bit by the presence of evil spirits the light of the Holy Ghost fell upon me and I received a testimony of the truth of that principle. Brother Harper could not seem to feel the same assurance which I felt and on several more attempts to pray we finally retired about 200 AM after praying for two hours (in Wright 1963, 127).

Their prayers continued but to no avail for Elder Harper. Nevertheless, they had both lost the desire to continue their missions. Twice they left their Paris duties to inquire into possibilities for working to earn their passage home. Finally, on 14 August, they divulged their feelings to President Christensen (Wright 1963, 128).

President Christensen, a generous and forgiving individual, tried to talk the problem through with them. He then counseled them to join him in fasting and prayer prior to meeting with him again the next day. When Jarvis prayed that night, he struggled to receive a testimony of which course to pursue. The effort was inconclusive (Wright 1963, 128). On the morrow, Elder Tucker was also present, having just returned to Paris from a visit to an outlying district. Under the direct questioning of the president, Tucker's cover began to unravel, and President Christensen soon realized this was something bigger than he could handle alone. On 19 August, a Tuesday, he telephoned the First Presidency in Salt Lake. The following Saturday, Apostle Hugh B. Brown arrived in Paris.

Apostle Brown was not able to undo in a weekend attitudes and decisions that had been building for months. He could not dissuade the two disaffected companions from departing without permission from the mission. Jarvis, who

had been so impressed by the manner and arguments of Elder Shore, was not impressed that Brown was inspired of God (Wright 1963, 124).

Meanwhile, after his talk with President Christensen but before Apostle Brown's arrival on Saturday, Tucker had gone with his traveling companion, H. Ray Hart, to Lausanne, Switzerland. Hart had dismissed the doctrines Tucker had brought up in casual conversation, thereby unknowingly disqualifying himself as a target of Tucker's proselytizing. Hart, unaware of Tucker's dissonance, was attracted to Tucker personally and thought he had the qualities of a General Authority. His first intimation that something was amiss came Friday evening after dinner at the branch president's home. Tucker began to argue convincingly that David O. McKay was indeed the president of the Church but was not a prophet. Hart was almost convinced and so greatly disquieted that he slept little that night. The next morning a telegram arrived requesting they report immediately to the mission home (Hart 1987).

The two traveled to Paris in silence arriving late Saturday evening. Early Sunday morning Apostle Brown interviewed them individually. Hart at first supported Tucker out of friendship and admiration, but he eventually realized that he had been duped. Tucker came out in open defiance of Apostle Brown and the Church (Hart 1987). Apostle Brown summarily released Tucker as a mission counselor.

According to one source, Tucker's spiritual state powerfully affected even those who had never met him. Mary B. Firmage, Zina B. Hodson, Zola Brown, and Lawrence Brown, all children of Apostle Brown, arrived at the French mission home on Sunday, 24 August. They had been on an excursion in Europe and knew nothing of what was afoot in France. As they sat down to dinner, a young man came in. Suddenly, Mary remembers, she felt a terrible spirit. She and Zina looked at each other, and Zina whispered, "It's Satan!" indicating that she shared Mary's feelings (Firmage 1986).

On Saturday, 30 August, a week after Apostle Brown's arrival, Henry D. Moyle, a counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, addressed a conference of French missionaries in Brussels. He plainly said that missionaries should get up early and spend their time proselyting. In their studies, they should concentrate on the scriptures and that not to excess (Hart 1987; Snow 1987). The text of a speech he gave two years later to the French missionaries on the same subject provides a clear statement of his position: "If you want to put your time in the mission field to the best advantage, stay with the scriptures. They are complicated enough for the best of us. There is no greater challenge for us than to read the scriptures and then teach the simple principles that are found therein" (Moyle 1960, 1).

The pious Stephen Silver, whose personality had changed so noticeably as Tucker's Paris companion, had been serving in Nice as the district president in the Marseille District since June. While he had rejected the modern Church's authority or truth, he still believed in the original Restoration. He wrote in his journal, "The great truths I was learning were strengthening my testimony of the mission of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. I felt the responsibility of bringing these truths to the French people" (Silver 1961, 2). Yet he



soon found that it was not easy to be in the Church and yet not be part of it. Juna Abbott, the former airline stewardess serving in Nice and a member of Elder Silver's district, received notice from her friend, Sister Wessel in Liège, about Elder Moyle's district conference address. Sister Abbott informed Silver, who recorded his dismay, "All we had studied in the wonderful old books and believed in was thrown down and trampled upon and rejected" (Silver 1961, 2).

Silver next learned from Sister Lamborn, then serving in Marseille, that he, Tucker, Wakeham, and Jordan, the four Paris confederates who had served as traveling elders, stood accused of undermining the mission. Yet Silver had not perceived their efforts as a conspiracy, feeling rather that, "we were united only in certain beliefs and in our hope for the future" (1961, 13). The question of whether a conspiracy existed or not would become a key point of misunderstanding between Church authorities and missionary dissidents in the days to follow.

Another key question that all French missionaries would soon confront was enunciated by Silver's companion, Gary Barnett, the Saturday evening in Marseille prior to their departure for London. Abruptly he queried Silver, "Brother, I want to ask you a question. Do you believe David O. McKay is a prophet?" Silver temporized but eventually admitted his disbelief. They then had a long talk and went to bed. Neither could sleep. After about an hour of wakeful silence, Barnett told Silver that he simply could not accept what Silver had told him (Silver 1961, 3).

The next day was a fast Sunday, and all the missionaries in the district gathered for a testimony meeting. Silver noted that missionaries previously in sympathy with his beliefs now turned their backs on him. He labeled their testimonies that day "parrot-like in their repetition" (Silver 1961, 3). That night the missionaries departed en masse for London.

Daniel Jordan, after serving as a traveling elder, had next been assigned to Bordeaux as the Bordeaux District President, replacing Don Norton, who would be leaving the mission field. The other senior companion in Bordeaux was Neil Poulsen who also shared the dissidents' concerns that the elders' preaching was not decisive or visionary and that early Church doctrines had been cast aside without the Lord's approval (Norton 1979, 4). Neil had been David Shore's last junior companion before Shore was released from his mission.

The extremist Jordan was, as usual, humorless and intense. While he spoke of how fortunate they were to be elders in a mission marked to lead out in the great work of the Lord, Jordan's tactics as the new district president were abrupt and disquieting. As Norton packed to leave, Jordan and Norton's former junior companion, David Ririe, went out to work. Ririe returned disconsolate. He explained in tears that Jordan had cut off all their contacts because they would not agree to be baptized in two weeks and that Jordan claimed he did so on the basis of revelation (Norton 1979, 5). The unhappy Ririe was soon transferred and William Turner appointed junior companion to Jordan.

As for J. Bruce Wakeham from Tucker's Pasadena stake, after serving as a traveler, he was appointed the district president of Strasborg, which included the city of Nancy. Loftin Harvey arrived in Nancy from Mulhouse in late August and found the branch in an uproar following one of Wakeham's visits. While Wakeham was there a local leader claimed he saw angels during the confirmation ceremony of a woman who claimed to be a visionary. This claim riled a faction in the branch that did not like the woman. Wakeham, however, had seconded the local leader's statement to the consternation of this faction. Wakeham later confided to Harvey that he had confirmed the statement only to support the leader and not because he could actually confirm the presence of angels (Harvey, Sept. 1986). Harvey was dismayed to learn of this deception.

Wakeham's teachings were an additional source of unrest among the missionaries. He instructed them in unorthodox doctrines such as conscientious objection, the united order, and the "new" form of spirituality (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960). Harvey did not agree with Wakeham's teachings. However, although he objected to these odd doctrines and argued with one of the elders in Nancy, probably one of the Tucker faction, about the Adam-God theory and conscientious objection, Harvey had not yet made a connection between these incidents and the Adam-God argument in Marseilles between Elders Johnson and Cheney (Harvey, Sept. 1986). He mistakenly viewed them as isolated outcroppings of heresy rather than evidence of a larger groundswell.

By the time the missionaries gathered in Paris to cross the channel for the dedication of the London Temple, many missionaries had an inkling that something was amiss in the French Mission. The atmosphere was tense and expectant. Missionaries learned that the companions Jarvis and Harper had jointly abandoned their missions and that Tucker had been removed from the mission presidency. In the absence of detail, many rumors — some exaggerated and unfounded — circulated through the groups of elders (Silver 1961, 4).

As for Tucker, Wakeham, and Silver, they found each other in the jostling milieu at the train station. Feeling a great sense of separation from the rest, they confided in each other their intent to leave their mission and were elated in their sense of unity (Silver 1961, 4).

On their way to the channel, Silver conversed with Wanda Scott, who had been a companion to Marilyn Lamborn in Marseille. Elder Silver and Sister Scott had shared scintillating but aberrant beliefs only shortly before, and she had been leaning toward the Tucker faction but had apparently been re-directed in conversations with Apostle Brown. Once again Silver was dismayed at the widening gulf between himself and former friends and allies. Tucker's teachings had fomented a trial of testimony that needed to be resolved individually, missionary by missionary. Many who had espoused Tucker's doctrine privately would soon think twice when to do so openly would mean accounting to Church authorities. Assurance would turn to confusion, and they would question Tucker's teachings as they had previously questioned those of the Church.

Poor weather made the channel crossing rough and many missionaries ill. For Harvey it was a great adventure, especially since he was looking forward to the temple dedication and did not suffer from seasickness. He went about consoling the ill as best he could.

Upon their arrival in London Monday evening, several of those most suspected of being in collusion with Tucker were summoned to the British Mission Home from the hotel where the missionaries were quartered. These included elders Tucker, Wakeham, and Silver, and sisters Lamborn, Abbott, Wessel, and Fulk. In the case of sisters Wessel and Fulk, the suspicion of collusion was a long way off the mark. Marlene Wessel was the sister who as a new arrival had been instructed to emulate Elder Tucker (Harvey, Sept. 1986). She was deeply involved in missionary work and had discounted Tucker's teachings as something beyond her ken (Owens 1986). Eunice (Nancy) Fulk, ingenuous and unsophisticated (Harvey, Sept. 1986), was also not the type to be interested in deep doctrinal questions. According to Silver, Fulk had known next to nothing of the whole question before London (Silver 1961, 6), although she had become a devotee of Tucker the person, accepting whatever he said unquestioningly.

The interviews at the mission home lasted from 9:00 P.M. until 2:30 A.M. Church authorities included: Jesse Curtis, Swiss-Austrian Mission president and friend of Silver's family; Howard W. Hunter, Pasadena Stake president and a former ecclesiastical leader of both Tucker and Wakeham; Clifton Kerr, British Mission president; and apostle Richard L. Evans. The main intent of the interviewers appears to have been to deal with the missionaries on a personal level. President Curtis tried to convince Silver of the disgrace his disaffection would bring to his family. Silver also recalls President Kerr speaking to him about the evils of polygamy and the ruin caused to families who still tried to live it. These arguments seemed irrelevant to Silver who, at that time, was more interested in discussing doctrinal issues and priesthood authority (Silver 1961, 5-6). None of the interviews appear to have accomplished their purpose.

Early the next morning, Tuesday, 9 September, all French missionaries were interviewed by General Authorities before leaving for the temple dedication services. A select group was called out first, being those most suspected of disharmony with the Church.

Harvey, to his surprise, was included in the first group of interviewees. A week earlier, while still in France, he had confessed to President Christensen that he did not honestly know that David O. McKay was a prophet of God. President Christensen did not know that Harvey's flawed testimony was in no way influenced by Tucker or his doctrines, and Harvey had no way of anticipating the reaction his confession would soon elicit. That Tuesday morning, he entered the interview room and was confronted by apostles Joseph Fielding Smith, Hugh B. Brown, and Henry D. Moyle. They came to the point quickly, Apostle Smith asking simply, "Do you know that David O. McKay is a prophet of God?" Harvey had grown up in the Church. He had accepted most of its teachings casually, with the exception of a strong testimony he had received

concerning the Book of Mormon. So, he reflected to himself, could he honestly answer yes to the question posed? He felt a strong obligation to be honest and simplified a sudden surge of emotions, desires, and questions with the reply, "No sir, I'm sorry I don't." Apostle Smith was unaware of Harvey's special situation and, according to Harvey, exclaimed, "I can't believe it!" "Disgraceful!" "Shocking!" With that, Harvey was summarily dismissed pending a more complete interview after the temple dedication. Harvey exited, feeling a great sense of relief that the interview was over. He felt satisfied that he had been honest even if he had not said what he knew was expected of him as a missionary (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 3, 7; Harvey, April 1986).

Joseph Fielding Smith and Henry D. Moyle interviewed Marlene Wessel, not a Tucker adherent, but a friend to the sisters under his influence. Her demeanor made it difficult for them to determine exactly what her position was. Elder Smith finally decided, "Don't worry about her. She has a cloud over her." Moyle replied, "Still, we can't let her go to the dedication because we have not let the others go" (Owens 1986). Marlene, like Loftin, had failed the interview.

William Turner, junior companion to the extremist Daniel Jordan but a new missionary not suspected of collusion, was interviewed by a single Church authority, Elray L. Christiansen. Turner had not prepared doctrinally for his mission, taking the gospel for granted and accepting a mission call in stride. In similar fashion, he had accepted what his senior Jordan had taught him without much question. He innocently and forthrightly answered all Christiansen's questions. Yes, he had heard that some General Authorities practiced polygamy. Yes, he thought you should not eat meat. Finally, Christiansen informed Turner that he believed in false doctrine and had better change or he would be excommunicated. When Turner protested in a befuddled way, Christiansen looked him straight in the eye and fortunately detected that Turner only needed help. He jotted a short note to President Christensen and sent Turner to find him (Turner 1986).

On the way, Turner passed an open doorway and to his dismay saw his companion, Daniel Jordan, openly arguing with Joseph Fielding Smith. Alarmed, he interrupted to ask his companion if he knew what he was doing. Apostle Smith instructed him to be on his way, then came to the door and closed it (Turner 1986).

Upon receipt of the note, President Christensen directed Turner to a room where he sat alone and waited, fearing he would be excommunicated. He watched missionaries who had passed their interviews go by, cheerful in their anticipation of the temple dedication to be held that day. He remembers feeling engulfed by an abyss from which he might never escape. Although he was granted permission to attend the temple dedication after all, coming to terms with the experience took many years (Turner 1986).

Bruce Cummings, another missionary who had been in sympathy with Tucker's teachings, found that the interview radically changed his perspective. It had been easy to be persuaded by Tucker's personality and logic. However, when listening carefully, eye-to-eye, with a General Authority, paying

close attention to whether the communication was spiritual as well as temporal, he recognized a difference. For Cummings, the interview was decidedly beneficial since he recanted the thoughts of the previous few months (Cummings 1987).

Ten missionaries did not pass the interviews: William Tucker, J. Bruce Wakeham, Stephen Silver, Daniel Jordan, Neil Poulsen, Loftin Harvey, Marilyn Lamborn, Juna Abbott, Nancy Fulk, and Marlene Wessel. None attended the temple dedication though Harvey and Poulsen went to view the temple grounds while the dedication was in progress.

Harvey enjoyed the companionship of Poulsen who was an earnest follower of Tucker. Indeed, Harvey now began to see himself somewhat romantically as an "apostate," though not from any affiliation with Tucker. Rather, he felt valorous for having spoken out that he did not "know" when many whom he suspected were equally unsure had undoubtedly answered "yes" for fear of being ostracized for their differences. He even began to revel in the shock he gave elders when he informed them of his status (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960).

The next morning, Wednesday, 10 September the ten missionaries were called into a meeting with the assembled authorities present. President Moyle pled with the group to come to their senses. He said that he decried a secret pact among them. This was not technically true; the group was not linked by any overt agreement. Yet their failure to sustain David O. McKay as a prophet united them in overt disaffection with the Church. They were offered clemency if they recanted. Moyle attempted various lines of argument, pointing out that if they had a testimony of one principle of the gospel it was a testimony of the whole. If they believed Joseph Smith was a prophet, he reasoned with them, it followed that David O. McKay was a prophet. He suggested in various ways that they ought to listen to age and experience and desist in being rebellious youth. A member of the dissident group raised a doctrinal question. President Moyle dismissed it, commenting that they, not the Church, were on trial (Silver 1961, 7; Harvey, April 1986; Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960).

Both President Christensen and his wife also spoke to the group, bearing their testimonies and begging them to change. He said they could stay on their missions even if they no longer did any proselyting. While Harvey regarded Christensen's plea as humble and sincere, neither he nor the others were dissuaded (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 9). The meeting was adjourned for a second round of individual interviews.

Harvey met with presidents Moyle and Christensen and a member of the Church's Presiding Bishopric, Thorpe B. Isaacson. The stress of unprecedented circumstances and the mistaken perception that the ten were conspirators largely dispelled patience and understanding. The interview proceeded, in Harvey's opinion, more like an interrogation. He felt he was not able to say more than "yes" or "no" without being cut short. Harvey experienced Bishop Isaacson's arguments as browbeating. On the other hand, he was again touched, but not persuaded, by President Christensen's pleadings for him to repent. After the interview, Harvey arose to leave and before departing em-

braced President Christensen. The strain of the moment suddenly surfaced and both men cried effusively. Harvey left the room and waited alone in the hallway (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 9–10).

Distrust lead to further misunderstandings. The same three authorities next interviewed Neil Poulsen. When he exited the room, he shook Harvey's hand, and they embraced. Bishop Isaacson, peering out of the interview room, misinterpreted their greeting and accosted them, exclaiming, "I caught you in your blood oath! That handshake of the secret pact won't do anything for you!" (Harvey, Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 10; Harvey, April 1986)

However, these interviews did at last succeed in separating the wrongly accused Sister Wessel from the group suspected of complicity. She left sobbing from the strain of the ordeal as well as exhaustion. She had been up into the early morning hours listening to the arguments of concerned elders trying to convince her to stay on her mission. Her private quest to decide what to do had not yet been successful. Much of her confusion was caused by hearing too many arguments. The authorities seemed to her too upset to testify, and though she wanted to hear testimony, she did not say so. She knew that she did not want to be excommunicated, yet, hurt and confused, her desire to remain on her mission had been deeply shaken (Owens 1986).

Harvey, also feeling rebuffed by the General Authorities, began to see excommunication as a possibility, although he still desired a testimony. He queried President Moyle during a break, asking him if he knew David O. McKay was a prophet. He was expecting a powerful statement of faith that would perhaps overpower and convince him; Moyle simply said, "Yes" (Harvey, April 1986).

Harvey dismissed this simple answer and chose rather to identify with his fellow defendants. He found comfort and companionship with them, though he did not yet share their doctrinal perceptions. Headstrong and swelling with youthful ardor, he began to accept the fact that he would be excommunicated because he did not "know" (Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 12).

Meanwhile the other French missionaries were attending a day-long testimony meeting at a local LDS chapel. Hugh B. Brown first addressed the group and then, beginning at 10:00 A.M., each individual missionary stood to testify. During a noon break, Apostle Brown asked four elders to accompany him to the mission home. H. Ray Hart, one of the four and the most recent companion of Elder Tucker, was not aware that they would serve as members of an excommunication court (Hart 1987).

While President Brown and the four elders were in transit, a second general meeting of the still dissident missionaries was being held. Bishop Isaacson spoke first. He lambasted the group for secretly promulgating their beliefs. President Christensen then addressed the group with his most ardent appeal. Stephen Silver witnessed only an excited man shouting at them (Silver 1961, 7) whereas H. Ray Hart, entering the mission home, said he recognized the voice of President Christensen, but it was unusually powerful, as if the Lord were speaking through him (Hart 1987).

With the arrival of Apostle Brown, it was decided to hold the court imme-

diately. The nine remaining dissidents requested a prayer circle. Bishop Isaacson refused, but President Moyle intervened and gave consent. The nine were left alone while the authorities went elsewhere to organize the court (Silver 1961, 7; Harvey Journal, 1 Dec. 1960, 11-12).

The court convened, and Elder Hart was asked to pray. He found it very difficult because an awful spirit oppressed him, a spirit that seemed to him to desist as the trial progressed. President Moyle later explained to him that both the spirit of the Lord and the adversary were present, exerting their opposed influences (Hart 1987).

Presiding at the court, Elder Moyle posed two questions: (1) "Do you sustain David O. McKay as a prophet, seer, and revelator of God?" and (2) "Do you want to be excommunicated?" Each participant responded individually. All nine ultimately answered no to the first question and yes to the second.

Tucker and Silver argued with President Brown but with little result. Harvey did not argue. He remembers commenting that he would like to know the truth and have someone help him but that he felt no one would answer his questions, leaving him little choice but to be excommunicated (Harvey, April 1986, Sept. 1986). Noting his ambivalence, President Moyle invited Harvey to separate from the group and have his case reviewed individually (Hart 1987). Harvey declined. He had finally cast his lot.

The court lasted for several hours. The verdict, pronounced at 4:00 P.M., was: all nine excommunicated. President Christensen wrote later, "It was truly one of the most heart-rending things to ever come into my life, to see our brothers and sisters excommunicated from the Church for apostasy" ("President's" 1958, n.p.).

After the verdict was rendered, President Brown added that when they returned home he would welcome them to come to him if ever they felt he could be of help. Harvey remembered the promise.

The four elders and the authorities who had been serving on the court then returned to the testimony meeting which was still in session. In what one missionary termed a phenomenally dramatic moment, the excommunication was announced (Snow 1987). Apostle Brown concluded the meeting at 8:00 P.M. with a discourse on the powers of the adversary and the future of the French Mission ("Excommunication," 1958, n.p.). He described what had happened as the worst missionary apostasy in the history of the Church (Peterson 1986) and further confided that they had discussed the possibility of closing the mission but decided the temple dedication would provide the opportunity to cleanse the mission. He stated that the mission would now flourish (Hart 1987).

The group of nine was inseparable after the excommunication. Harvey, having cast his lot with the others, began to absorb the doctrines that he had once opposed. In bitterness he determined that as the "Church" had judged him of no worth, so he would judge the Church worthless. However, as a whole, the group felt more euphoric than bitter now that the matter was formally concluded. Commenting on the departure of the missionaries return-

ing to France, Silver wrote: "We were so happy and they all looked so sad. They must have thought we were true devils. We of course tried to be understanding but there was such a joy and liberty in our hearts that it was difficult not to have a smile at all times" (Silver 1961, 7).

To their surprise Sister Wessel now joined them. Though she remained a member in good standing, she had opted to accompany them home, hoping to sort out her concerns more successfully there. The group returned to France to gather up their possessions before departing from Paris for the United States. Short of funds, Harvey hitchhiked to Nancy and back. Left by the Church to their own devices to get home, they pooled their money to obtain ship's passage.

Suddenly, Harvey received word that news of his excommunication may have caused a tragedy at his home in Utah. The bishop in his ward, mortified by the excommunication, had announced to the congregation that Harvey would never be rebaptized as long as he was bishop. Perhaps a result of the shocking news from France, the bishop's vindictive public announcement, or perhaps merely an unhappy coincidence, Harvey's father had suffered a heart attack. Desperate to get home, Harvey obtained a loan from his girlfriend in Utah to pay for airfare and returned separately from the others (Harvey, April 1986; June 1986).

Among the missionaries who left London unscathed were some who still had doubts. Frank Willardsen remembers that his companion compensated for lingering doubts by immersing himself in the work (Willardsen 1986). Church authorities fully suspected latent sympathies among the elders. Before the year 1958 ended, Elray L. Christiansen, an assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, toured the mission and stringently interviewed each missionary (Nelson 1986).

While wrenching, the events in London may well have been usefully cathartic. Many missionaries felt revitalized, learning to balance work and service with prayer, study, and introspection as sources of testimony. In December 1959, a little over a year after the trial, President Moyle visited the mission. Anticipating the new year, he asked the mission leaders what baptismal goal they ought to set for themselves. They consulted and agreed on 400, four times the average baptismal rate of the ten years previous. President Moyle chuckled and said, "I love to see men with more faith than I have." Then more seriously he added, "Brethren, you can have those 400 by the 4th of July" (Nelson 1986). By 4 July 1960, 404 new converts had been baptized, and by the end of 1960 the baptismal total stood at 942. It was an exceptional year in which the mission broke from the statistical mire of its past and was regenerated with an influx of new members.

In the longer term, the experience taught those who knew and had admired Elder Tucker that appearances can deceive. All too often, young unprepared elders and sisters had unwillingly adopted beliefs that were convincingly presented, but contrary to the very work they were engaged in.

Church authorities, also unprepared to deal with these unprecedented events and personalities, failed to prevent apostasy, though their efforts pared



down the size of it. Yet, more sadly, no winnowing process is error-proof and in the case of Loftin Harvey, the interviewers may not have distinguished between overly scrupulous honesty and genuine apostasy.

Consequently, Harvey exited the formal trial in London only to face the greater trial of living with the verdict. It was not easy for Harvey to return home. He suffered from the ostracism attendant to excommunication at that period. His father, who had survived the heart attack, and his mother told him he was being influenced by an evil spirit. With self-justification and some vengeance in mind he obtained an audience with Presiding Bishop Isaacson whom he had last seen in France. Accompanied by his girlfriend, he confronted the bishop with scriptural problems for which Isaacson could provide no answers. Harvey was satisfied to think he had made him look foolish in his girlfriend's eyes. She was a little comforted, wanting to be loyal to Harvey, but remained confused. His vengeful desire now somewhat sated, he telephoned Apostle Brown. Brown welcomed him with open arms and, true to his promise, listened to Harvey for hours (Harvey, April 1986; June 1986).

Harvey then felt a need to investigate the propositions of the LeBaron movement. Mexico had become the designated gathering place of the excommunicated French missionaries. Harvey was the first of the group to arrive, yet he stayed only a couple of days, then left satisfied that he had not found what he wanted.

Feeling uncomfortable at home, Harvey moved to San Francisco. He went to Pentecostal, Catholic, and Jewish services looking for something which would compel his faith. He also wrote to President McKay. The president responded, encouraging Harvey to do the Lord's will but leaving it up to him to discover what that might be in his case. He received no answer to his fasts and prayers and eventually gave up trying to know (Harvey, April 1986, June 1986).

In this frame of mind, he was approached in 1960 by two young men easily recognizable as LDS missionaries. Not knowing his background, they persisted in contacting him until he consented to lessons. After a few lessons, the senior companion, Andrew Laudie, sensing that their contact knew more than he was revealing, stopped the discussion and asked, "Brother Harvey, were you ever a missionary?" Harvey said, "Yes." With tears in his eyes, Elder Laudie rose and hugged his investigator. For Harvey, the embrace was spiritual as well as physical; he felt something he had not felt for years. This was the turning point. He was now headed back (Harvey, April 1986, June 1986).

Rebaptized in October 1961, Harvey requested the priesthood the following summer. Apostle Brown arranged an interview with Joseph Fielding Smith during July 1962. After some conversation, Apostle Smith asked, "Do you know that David O. McKay is a prophet of God?", the same question Harvey had confronted under much different circumstances almost four years earlier. Harvey said, "Yes." Apostle Smith arose without further conversation, circled to the back of his chair, laid his hands on Harvey's head and conferred the priesthood (Harvey, Aug. 1986).

Others separated from the Church because of the Tucker affair eventually returned. Of the nine excommunicants, Loftin Harvey and his friend, Neil Poulsen, were rebaptized. Four others who left France without testimonies, regained them, namely David Shore (Tucker's Marseille companion who sent the apostate literature from Utah), the companions, Ronald Jarvis and Harvey Harper who left their missions early, and Marlene Wessel. David Shore and Ronald Jarvis were both excommunicated after returning from their missions but were later rebaptized. Harvey Harper completed his term of missionary service in the Eastern States Mission. Marlene Wessel returned to France to complete her missionary service, having obtained an assurance that this was the course she should follow.

A decade passed. In 1968 Apostle Marion G. Romney visited the mission. Staying up late to visit with the staff at the mission home, he finally stood up to retire. At the doorway, he turned as if to say something that had just crossed his mind. "Oh, brethren, did I mention about Elder Tucker. He passed away recently" (Roberts 1986). Only a few of the missionaries understood the reference. William Tucker had died of acute appendicitis. Joining the LeBaron movement in Mexico after leaving France, he had eventually abandoned it as well, dying an avowed atheist in 1967 (Bradlee and Van Atta 1981, 80).

Of the seven, four elders and three sisters, who never rejoined the Church, all lived in Mexico for some time and supported the LeBaron movement. Stephen Silver, Dan Jordan, and J. Bruce Wakeham served as apostles in that group along with Tucker. Marilyn Lamborn and Nancy Fulk married Tucker, the latter union ending in divorce. Juna Abbott married Wakeham. Dan Jordan became a close associate of Ervil LeBaron and was indicted for the murder of Joel LeBaron. He left the movement and moved to Colorado. While on a hunting trip in Utah in the fall of 1987 he was killed by an unknown assailant.

Facing the opposition of nonmembers is the common fate of missionaries. Facing opposition from within their ranks was the uncommon fate of the French missionaries of 1958. Uncommon circumstances convulsed to fling individuals into paths centrifugal to that proclaimed by either faith. For Loftin Harvey, the hope to "know" was not fulfilled until long after he was publicly branded an apostate. The trial for unnumbered others also drawn into the circle of Tucker's beliefs was conducted less publicly. The verdicts rendered remain the private legacies of each individual who followed Tucker to the edge of their ken and to whatever lay beyond.

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