

**Genealogy Talk—Cook Reunion—Richard E. Cook**  
**July 15, 2006**

Mary and I served for roughly four years in the Asia Area Presidency in Hong Kong. While in this assignment we got to know many wonderful Chinese people. The Chinese are some of the world's greatest genealogists. It is not unusual for a Chinese family to be able to trace its ancestors back over a thousand years. What's amazing is that, unlike us, they don't have revelation that directs them to keep track of their ancestors. They do it as a matter of pride and family tradition. They recognize that "genealogies, family stores, historical accounts, and traditions form a bridge between past and future and bind generations together in ways that no other keepsake can." (a)

I thoroughly believe that genealogies, family stories, historical accounts, and traditions do bind generations together and that is enough on its own to cause us to work diligently at preserving these ties with the past.

The wonderful thing about membership in the LDS Church, however, is that we have revelation that makes it much more important to maintain these ties.

**First:** We have the statement by Jesus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (b)

**Second:** After his crucifixion Jesus ministered in the spirit world, i.e. doing missionary work among the dead who had not heard the gospel. We would expect that baptism for these souls would be expected as implied in a statement by the Apostle Paul: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead." (c) We would have no idea what this meant if the gospel had not been restored and the Angel Moroni had not instructed Joseph that: "I will reveal unto you the priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn (d) to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be wasted." (e)

Joseph was chosen to head this Church, to receive and administer priesthood authority, and to restore those plain and precious truths lost to

human knowledge. (f) One such doctrine was that of salvation for the dead. An important part of the restitution of all things. (f)

Sever years ago Elder Howard W. Hunter said: “Does it seem reasonable that persons who have lived upon the earth and died without the opportunity of baptism should be deprived throughout eternity? Is there anything unreasonable about the living performing the baptisms for the dead? Perhaps the greatest example of vicarious work for the dead is the Master himself. He gave his life as a vicarious atonement, that all who die shall live again and have life everlasting. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves. In a similar way we can perform ordinances for those who did not have the opportunity to do them in lifetime.”

Elder Hunter added: “Not only may baptisms be performed for the dead, but endowments; also sealings, by which wives become eternal companions to husbands and their children sealed to them as a family. The sealing of family units can be continued until the family of God is made perfect. This is the great work of the dispensation of the fullness of times. ... The uniting and redemption of the family of God was the divine plan before the foundations of the earth were laid.” (g)

I am mindful that there may be some among us who are not of our faith. Some may be offended by these ordinances. To those I say two things:

1. The principal of agency pertain to both sides of the veil. Not all will accept or be worthy of these ordinances. (i)
2. There is no offense intended; our Father in Heaven only intended to bless them. The doctrine of salvation for the dead is laden with love and is intended to perpetuate the greatest of relationships—the family.

So if you are here to:

- build bridges with the past
- to do salvation for the dead
- network
- out of curiosity or
- had nothing better to do, or all of the above

I think we can all agree that we want to trace our genealogy and specifically the Cook line as far back as we can.

There are some of us that believe that we have, so far, only been able to go back to William cook born in 1780. That would be Henry Freeman Cook's Father. But at that point we hit a genealogical wall.

I have a three ring binder in front of me that purports to take that line back to the 1500's and Salem, Massachusetts. I have no idea if these data are correct but they form an integral part of genealogical work performed by others and submitted to the Church. In other words, others are relying on the accuracy of these data.

I am not suggesting, however, that we should. In fact, I am suggesting that the Cook family form a genealogical committee to verify the data in the Church's genealogical files and extend the work back as far as possible beyond what has been done.

This will be a formidable task and require our best efforts. I suggest we form a committee of our best family genealogists that want and know how to work. I suggest that they meet and select a chairman and executive secretary, lay out the objectives of the committee, make assignments and set a budget. I suggest they meet once a month at a convenient location to follow up on assignments and track progress.

I suggest that Ron Cook preside over the group until it is fully organized. I furthermore suggest that the following people volunteer to be members of the committee:

Paul Henke  
Kris Robertson  
Ken Kruel  
Craig La Rocco  
Ron Clark  
Alonzo Cook

We will need other volunteers to be part of this committee. If you are willing to work, and want to be included, please come up afterward and put your name of this sheet of paper.

Ron, may I have your commitment that the first meeting of the committee will be held before September 1, 2006 and that your progress will be reported on the Cook family website?

Are there any questions or suggestions?

- (a) Dennis B. Neuenschwander. General Conference, April 1999
- (b) John 3:5
- (c) 1 Corinthians 15:20
- (d) Salvation if sealed according to Joseph Smith
- (e) Doctrine and Covenants 2: 1-3
- (f) See 1 Nephi 13:26, 28-29, 32, 34-35, 40
- (g) Acts 3:21
- (h) Ensign, December 1971, pp 71-72
- (i) First Presidency letter 8 December 1988

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