

An RLDS historian considers the effects of economic prosperity and liberal ideas on the Restoration and projects a track the church might travel in the twenty-first century.

THE RLDS CHURCH AND THE DECADE OF DECISION

By Roger D. Launius

INTRODUCTION

FOR MANY REASONS, THE 1990S ARE SHAPING UP to be a decade of decision for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and the method in which the church handles this process may well chart the theological direction the institution will go, or even whether it will continue to be a separate movement in the twenty-first century. This decision-making process is required because of a post-1950 theological and cultural reformation in the Reorganized Church. In this period, Reorganization liberals emerged to demythologize church history, theology, and assorted traditions. Over time, this reformation brought about the dismantling of what had been a traditional Reorganized Church ideological consensus. That consensus had been forged in the tension between the desire to remain faithful to the stories, symbols, and events of early Mormonism on the one hand and the yearning for respectability among, and hence openness to, Protestants on the other.¹ This tension was held in creative balance until the recent schism because of the unique heritage of the RLDS as the people in middle, seeking to steer between the Scylla of excessively authoritarian, speculative Nauvoo Mormonism and the Charybdis of rigidly creedal, congregational Protestant sectarianism. As Clare D. Vlahos observed, "The early Reorganization waited, caught somewhere in between, neither gentile nor Mormon."² This broad-based reformation struck at the very core of the Reorganized Church's origins and reasons for existence held since the 1850s. The collapse of the Reorganized Church's philosophical synthesis—the failure to blend convincingly the symbols, stories, and events of the Reorganization's tradition with an influx

of Protestant ideas—has created a theological and historical vacuum, which must now be filled.

The April 1996 ordination of W. Grant McMurray as president of the Reorganized Church, succeeding Wallace B. Smith, may well signal the ultimate rejection of the principles of the Restoration movement as expressed in the life and ministry of Joseph Smith Jr. As such, it is the completion of the reformation underway for nearly forty years. Most important, it divorced the leadership of the RLDS from the family of the founding prophet, and while it could be concluded that the kingdom as Joseph Smith envisioned it went to Utah, until now, the line of kings had remained in the Midwest and headed the Reorganized Church. The legitimacy this fact has given the RLDS for more than a century has now been lost. This outcome, perhaps, was foreshadowed as long ago as a generation when the first complaints about the Reorganized Church's loss of its distinctive identity began to be voiced.

I will briefly trace the collapse of the ideological consensus within the RLDS institution, the ramifications this has held for the modern institution, and the dilemmas for the future. Then I will describe what I think are some key elements that might be incorporated into a new theological and historical consensus, one that might have the potential to carry forward the Reorganized Church as a viable religious institution.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE

After World War II, economic and cultural change in the larger society brought the RLDS membership into the middle class and helped create a better-educated leadership. For the first time, the church began to worry about its position in society.

PERHAPS the central theme of twentieth century American religion has been its encounter with modernity—the changes to the larger society's priorities, assumptions, and values as a response to emerging concepts in science, technology, economics, politics, philosophy, and the overall *Weltanschauung*. American religious historian Martin E.

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Marty wrote that religious institutions changed depending on how they

embraced, rejected, or cautiously accepted the modern world—by aggressively advocating modernity or uneasily accepting it, by self-consciously preserving older ways in the context of modernity or by transforming traditions through a stance of antimodernism, or, finally, by attempting to pass beyond or through the modern to a more basic religious stance unaffected by it.³

While much of American Protestantism began responding in the early part of the twentieth century, the Reorganized Church really began to wrestle seriously with modernity in the 1960s. After several twists, by the end of the 1970s, the Reorganized Church had embraced modernity and was beginning to make a home for itself as a denomination among, and not apart from, the nation's mainline Christian churches. This was true for several reasons.

During the years following World War II, the Reorganized Church's membership, at least in North America, where more than 90 percent of the membership still reside, participated in a rapid rise in economic status and the changes it wrought on society. And because of this economic shift, the post-World War II years brought a gradual transition of the institutional church from a largely rural and working-class constituency to a more white-collar, urban, middle-class membership. Prior to this change, the Reorganized Saints had appealed particularly to the poor and working classes of industrial Western civilization, who, as "have nots," were attracted to its zionist message and its socially egalitarian system.⁴



FREDERICK MADISON SMITH

As RLDS president from 1915–46, Smith began trends to professionalism that undermined the church's naive pietism.

The theological shift of the 1960s and '70s set the stage for the same type of debate over authority, structure, and theology that had been played out in the mainline Protestant denominations in the early decades of the twentieth century, with liberals prevailing in most cases as increasing numbers of key staff members had graduate, usually theological, degrees, and they encouraged others to broaden their vistas in similar fashion.

appointee leaders in a position of substantial identification with larger American society and bringing a concomitant stake in maintaining stability and respectability within the surrounding community.

This development perhaps did not cause but certainly

The shift in church membership from the lower to the middle class during the post-war era brought a similar transition in the ranks of the full-time ministry. Through the 1950s, even in the rare instances when they could afford to do otherwise, the church's appointees were expected to live extremely frugally. To emphasize its thrifty use of contributors' tithing, until 1958, the church published, by name, all appointee expenses and family allowances in the *Conference Daily Bulletin*. Not even the general officers, including the First Presidency, were immune from such publicity.⁵ During the 1960s, however, the church began making significant efforts toward providing more substantial support for its leadership and their families. As contributions permitted (and during the decade they permitted better than ever before), the church gradually improved its appointee family allowances and instituted attractive fringe benefits such as excellent medical care, college tuition reimbursement for dependents, and a generous retirement plan. These actions placed appointee families squarely in the American middle class.⁶

A change in appointment policy was accelerated by this trend and, in turn, probably itself accelerated it. For the first time, employment with the church was economically rewarding enough to attract the best-educated and most capable men in the church. Increasingly, better-educated people began to fill the appointee ranks. They brought a wider perspective to their work than had earlier generations, placing the church's

abetted a greater openness to Protestantism and accommodation to modern society than had ever been present in the church before. The more wealth one has, the less likely one is to promote policies that may threaten it; the more integrated one is within a society, the less motivation one has to radically alter it. As the church and its leaders moved securely into the North American middle class, they quite naturally began to see tension and apartness from society as potentially damaging to their newly acquired status and stability. In short, the Reorganized Church moved from a sect to a denomination as it reconsidered its place in the world. Whereas it once saw its mission and destiny apart from society as a whole and, in many respects, saw society as inimical to its task, the church in the mid-twentieth century began to see the benefits of cooperation and increased accommodation to societal standards and demands. The church as a body began to be more open to the influences of the society around it, and in the process it moved into the mainstream secular world of the United States. That is not to say that this was an inevitability, only that it was the course the Reorganization chose for itself. It also does not say that other factors were not at work to prompt the church in that direction as well.⁷

THEOLOGICAL SHIFTS

The adoption of modern scholarship by members of the RLDS church hierarchy, most of whom were now university educated, brought about a liberal Protestant theological reformation in the 1960s and '70s.

CONCOMITANT with the economic development issue in the church, and closely related to it, was a theological reformation in the Reorganization. Beginning in the 1950s, and truly felt in the 1960s Reorganization, liberals engaged in a reorientation of the traditional RLDS consensus. The theological reformation was initiated long before it began to be apparent in the Reorganization, and in some respects it paralleled developments in many American Protestant churches, with a difference mainly in timing. For instance, Frederick Madison Smith, president of the Reorganization between 1915 and 1946, set in motion policies that eventually helped diminish the church's historic sense of theological uniqueness by encouraging the use of the tools of modern behavioral science and management theory in church work. His emphasis on education, training, and professionalism undermined the naive pietism on which the church had often depended in its earliest years. Under successor Israel A. Smith, president between 1946 and 1958, the church increased reliance on secular education and accepted its implications for professionalism. Israel Smith promoted the Department of Religious Education's plans to broaden the preparation and depth of its full-time staff and Sunday School teachers in the field. He also created the School of the Restoration to provide specialized leadership training for the ministry, but this school offered much more than pastoral training and leadership seminars. Its students were encouraged to study seriously church history and theology in light of outside scholarship.⁸

This theological shift set the stage for the same type of debate over authority, structure, and theology that had been played out in the mainline Protestant denominations in the early decades of the twentieth century, with liberals prevailing in most cases.⁹ The seeds of theological debate were harvested during the presidency of W. Wallace Smith, 1958–1978, the time during which these questions began to emerge in a serious way in the Reorganization. But although Wallace Smith did not begin the theological reformation, clearly his policies allowed it to prevail. One of these actions was his choice of key leaders in the Reorganized Church's quorums. For example, at the October 1958 General Conference, when Smith was ordained prophet, he named a well-read and reflective apostle, Maurice L. Draper, as his second counselor. At the same time, Smith called men of similar characteristics, Clifford A. Cole and Charles D. Neff, to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles and Roy A. Cheville, a University of Chicago-trained theologian, as Presiding Patriarch.¹⁰ At the same time, increasing numbers of key staff members had graduate, usually theological, degrees, and they encouraged others to broaden their vistas in similar fashion.¹¹

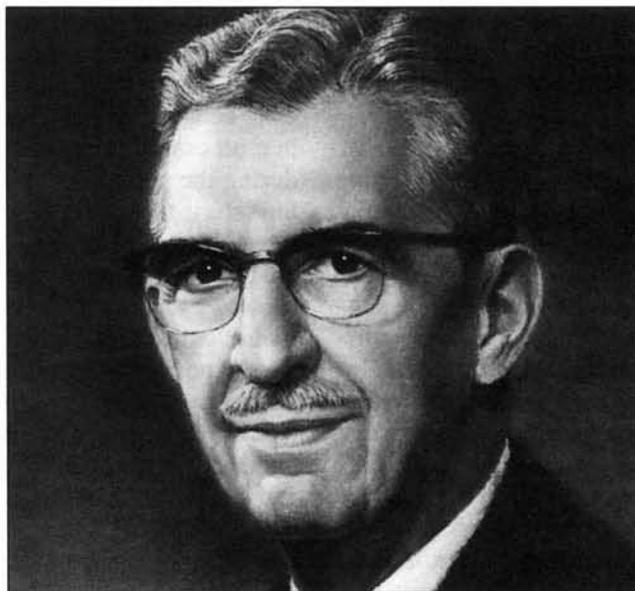
Formal theological training of church staff members had a liberalizing effect on the materials developed for Sunday School and on the articles appearing in the *Saints Herald* and other church publications.¹² These trends were apparent at least as early as the fall of 1960, when the Religious Education Department published a series of quarterlies on the Old Testament for high school students. Written by Garland E. Tickemyer, these quarterlies embraced an evolutionary and mythological view of the Old Testament. Tickemyer, who had written a master's thesis on Joseph Smith and process theology at the University of Southern California, and who was then president of the all-church High Priests' Quorum, approached the subject from the standpoint of higher criticism, and these quarterlies excited controversy in the church. Some congregations refused to use them, and certain members of the Quorum of Seventies vocally opposed Tickemyer's interpretation of the Bible.¹³

A change in editorship at the *Saints Herald*, the church's official periodical, also opened a new channel for the expression of intellectual ferment. The new editor, Roger Yarrington, allowed publication of several liberal articles in the *Herald* in the early 1960s. Probably the two most controversial were by James E. Lancaster and Lloyd R. Young. Lancaster, in a historical article called "By the Gift and Power of God," concluded that the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith through a "seer stone," which Smith looked into as it sat in the bottom of a hat, while the plates were under cover on a nearby table.¹⁴ This was a shock to many Reorganized Latter Day Saints who had been taught without qualification the traditional story of Joseph viewing the golden plates through a spectacle-like Urim and Thummim.¹⁵ Using the tools of modern scholarship, Young's theological article, "Concerning the Virgin Birth," questioned the historical evidence for Mary's virginity at the time of Jesus' birth.¹⁶ Letters of protest streamed into Herald House each time one of these articles was

published. In similar fashion, and with equally provocative reactions, book-length publications from the church's press began to reflect more liberal ideas during the early 1960s as well.¹⁷

In the same period, the church's only institution of higher learning and a traditional place of RLDS intellectual inquiry, Graceland College, hired new faculty members to teach religion, philosophy, and history. Each of these new faculty were young, had been trained in secular educational institutions, and were somewhat liberal in their beliefs. They began to reexamine Latter Day Saint theology and history critically with the tools of their disciplines, and their more liberal emphases quickly showed in their teaching. Criticism of these faculty for undermining the faith of students was often heard in the 1960s.¹⁸

All of this would have come to nothing had not the broadened approach to understanding the Reorganization's theology and history found an audience among the church hierarchy of the 1960s. This was especially manifest in three important developments in the latter part of the decade. The first was a 1967 series of three private seminars with the eighteen members of the church's Joint Council of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and Presiding Bishopric, conducted by theologian W. Paul Jones and religious historian Carl Bangs, both of whom were members of Kansas City's Saint Paul School of Theology, a Methodist seminary. These individuals gave a new slant to familiar problems in the Reorganization by defining them in the context of Protestantism.¹⁹ The seminars incorporated symbols and explanations from the larger Christian community rather than emphasizing traditional concerns of the Reorganized Church. One important part of Jones and Bangs's emphasis was the lessening of the standard "true church" concept of the Reorganization, stressing that any church was



W. WALLACE SMITH

The RLDS president from 1958–78 who was a patron of a liberal orthodoxy among the church hierarchy.

A schism among the membership developed during the 1960s and '70s as educated elites began to move the RLDS church in a direction not understood by many of its members. A church survey conducted in the late 1960s confirmed that broad theological training created a serious rift between these theologically schooled people and others without the background.

"true" only to the extent that it reflected the spirit and personality of Jesus Christ.²⁰ Some church members, not surprisingly, were appalled by these seminars, which contradicted the Doctrine and Covenants direction to go forth into the world to "teach" and not "to be taught."²¹ As one delegate told the 1970 World Conference, "These other schools have nothing to teach us," since the Reorganization already possessed the "fullness of the gospel."²²

Second, the 1969 development and presentation of a set of theological "Position Papers" for use in developing new Sunday School curriculum sources also signaled a theological shift among the church's leadership. Most of these papers had been written by Department of Religious Education staff members, but some were the products of members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.²³ They annihilated many of the traditional theological conceptions of the Reorganization and presented an interpretation of the church as a mainline Protestant denomination.

Third, in 1970, the Reorganized Church published its most significant theological work of the reformation era, *Exploring the Faith*. Written by committee over a ten-year period (an interesting development in itself), *Exploring the Faith* placed the Reorganization squarely within the mainstream of American religion. It deemphasized the Reorganization's

unique aspects and stressed those more characteristic of "orthodox" Christian denominations. The foreword to the book pointed out the central concern of the authors: "Historical and traditional points of view needed to be expanded in view of contemporary religious experience and scholarship." It particularly played down the Reorganization's historic "one true church" claim. In so doing, it pointed out how the Restoration fit into a larger Christian mosaic. Without question, this book

was a significant attempt to systematize the theological reformation taking place in the church.²⁴

No doubt the exposure of young men of influence in the church's hierarchy to seminary education had a significant and perhaps unplanned effect. In undertaking advanced training, these church officials experienced a whole new world of religious inquiry, and, like the frog who jumped from a well into the sea, they realized, after a lifetime of experience limited to the Reorganization, that a broader vision was possible and probably necessary for the advancement of the church. A schism among the membership developed at that point, as educated elites began to move the church in a direction not understood by some of its appointees or by many of its members. For instance, a church survey of appointees conducted in the late 1960s confirmed that broad theological training created a serious rift between these theologically schooled people and others without the background. The study concluded that there was "a very clear difference between appointees in general and those persons in the church who are seminarians or who hold a seminary degree. Generally the Bachelor of Divinity and seminarians are more liberal in theological orientation and overall perspective. They tend to be more critic[al] of the institutional church, see a greater need for education, particularly of appointees, and are more ecumenically oriented."²⁵

This dichotomy became quickly visible to the church's appointee force. Many of the field ministers, especially members of the Quorum of Seventy, began to rebel against what they perceived as a deemphasis of Restoration distinctives—the very things that made the Reorganization what it was—and the resultant drift toward ecumenism. Al M. Pelletier, one of the most dynamic Seventies in the church during this period, was an old-school Reorganization member. Most of his education and training had been either independent or carried out under one of the church's other appointee ministers. He had no use for the shift from exclusivity within the institutional church that he began to see in the 1960s. In 1967, he complained, in an open letter to the Joint Council, about "several items in publications and church school materials which are unscriptural." He continued:

As far as the liberals, it is most unfortunate that we are divided into schools of opposition today. The church I joined years ago was comprised of Latter Day Saints. I still try to be one. I believe and teach and preach what is in our *Church History*, *The Inspired Version*, *The Book of Mormon*, and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Every time I teach these things I'm speaking out against any liberal who denies the authenticity of some of these things. I cannot help this but can only follow the admonition given in scripture, to teach the fullness of the gospel as taught within the scriptures which are to be a "law unto the church." These teachings accompanied by my personal testimony will continue to consume my time and energy. I believe in this church and tell it to the world. I do not preach any doubts. I am sorry that some both preach and write about their doubts.²⁶

Significantly, Pelletier left the church in the early 1970s, in part

over the theological reformation taking place.²⁷

It would be inappropriate to suggest that the theological reformation of the 1960s was executed entirely by well-educated "young turks" who wanted to remake the Reorganization into a Protestant denomination, although I would suggest that such individuals were largely responsible for it. In part, however, it was fueled by the church's expanding missionary work in non-Christian cultures. Church leaders who were sent into those areas in the post-World War II years determined that traditional Reorganization missionary techniques were ineffective. The usual missionary approach, they argued, was to demonstrate how the Restoration brought about by Joseph Smith Jr. was correct and true to God's dictates, and then to convince investigators that the Reorganized Church was the "true" successor to Smith's prophetic legacy. It was a defensive approach, built on the destruction of other religious claims, especially those of the Utah Latter-day Saints. Apostle Clifford A. Cole and other appointees asserted, however, that these techniques were next to meaningless in societies where people were not already converted to Christianity.²⁸ Cole explained that a refocusing of ideals was necessary to meet these new conditions. He told a meeting of High Priests in 1971 that

we are shifting from an emphasis on distinctives—that is, on the ways we are different from other [Christian] churches—to a concern for teaching the whole gospel of Jesus Christ and winning persons to committing themselves to Him. Prior to the last two decades our missionary emphasis was highlighted by . . . [an approach toward explaining that we were not Mormons and on materials] on such subjects as apostasy, stories of Joseph Smith and the founding experiences of the Restoration movement, and life after death. Since that time . . . [the emphasis has shifted] indicating a concern for ministry to people and a desire to bring them not only to the church but to Jesus Christ.²⁹

Because of increased financial resources brought on by the economic well-being of the North American membership, and because of the general movement of large numbers of Americans beyond national boundaries in the post-World War II period, the Reorganized Church opened mission work, during the 1960s, in twelve new, non-English speaking countries, more than doubling the number of those nations in which the church was operating. Previously, the church had not opened work in a non-English speaking nation since 1875, when it had sent missionaries to Scandinavia. This new effort took place following the creation, in 1958, of a Missions Abroad Committee to foster international activities. To build small enclaves of Saints, this committee used contacts with American Reorganization members serving overseas with the military, other government agencies, or businesses. Virtually all of the foreign missions of the Reorganized Church were founded as a result of individual members' contact with people of the area.³⁰

Without question, the Reorganization's structure and belief system was altered as a result of its contact with non-Western civilization but probably not to the extent that many have as-

serted. First, it was never a foregone conclusion that the Reorganization would be fundamentally altered because it moved into foreign missions. Other churches have made that same move before with their bedrock religious distinctives intact. The most obvious example from the modern era would be the Utah Latter-day Saints, who, while having their own difficulties on the international scene, have retained their distinctive identity in spite of interaction with other cultures. Second, many of the early converts to the Reorganized Church in these new areas were already Christian and entered membership in the Reorganization because of the traditional "true church" arguments made by the movement's missionaries. This has been repeated in numerous accounts of baptisms overseas, as the candidates were disgruntled over answers provided in their various Christian churches and began searching for alternate positions. Indeed, many of the people joining the church in such places as Latin America, Africa, and Haiti during the 1960s and 1970s were former Latter-day Saints who had become disenchanted with Mormonism; it was in some instances a replay of the Reorganization's traditional source of converts. In this environment, there was little impetus for basic theological change. Third, if the church changed fundamentally because of the conversion of non-Western members, as many members of the leading quorums have suggested, the numbers of converts have been so insignificant—only 2,720 by 1970—that it is rather like the tail wagging the dog. It raises a question about the validity of democracy and the principle of "common consent" in the church for such a small number to restructure the church so thoroughly. It seems, instead, that the church was already in the process of theological change as it entered the foreign mission field in a substantive way, and this missionary endeavor



THE RLDS TEMPLE IN INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI.
Its mission to promote peace could eventually change the church's identity.

The 1984 revelation by Wallace B. Smith had something for everybody. The liberal element got women's ordination; the church hierarchy could force its lay ministers to meet certain educational, orthodoxy, and activity standards; and the more traditional membership received permission to build a temple. But, ironically, it widened the schism.

provided added impetus and a rationale for the changes already at work.³¹

THE PIVOTAL YEAR

A watershed 1984 revelation blew the liberal/conservative fissure into a wide-open schism. While the document provided for the long-prophesied building of a temple, it also drove thousands from the church by allowing for the ordination of women to the priesthood.

IN 1984, the Reorganized Church accepted, in formal conference action, the revelation now incorporated into the Book of Doctrine and Covenants as section 156. This document represents the watershed in the Latter Day Saints' wrestling with the questions of modernity, something of the culmination of the reformation period, and the beginning of an attempt to build a new ideological consensus for the movement. It presented the church with what will be the first test in what I call a decade of decision in the 1990s.³² Section 156 provided the license for the shotgun wedding of two forces that define the closing years of the Reorganization's reformation: what can only be called theological confusion and brilliant (though I would argue Machiavellian and authoritarian) politics. In retrospect, the document was a marvelously political statement on a par with any omnibus bill drafted by congressional rivals—it had something for everybody. The liberal element of the church got women's ordi-

nation, something that had been a sore point for years. Certainly this was an incredibly important decision, one which will be felt by the church ever after.³³ The church hierarchy, which wanted a more efficient means of controlling its priesthood members, obtained the sanction to begin a priesthood review process and to force its lay ministers, in order to continue in good standing, to meet certain educational, orthodoxy, and activity standards.³⁴ Finally, the more traditional

membership, which felt closer ties to historic manifestations of Mormonism, received permission to build a temple in the "Center Place." This had been a goal which extended back almost to the beginnings of the movement and which had been viewed as inevitable before the inauguration of the Millennium.

This document has provided an especially challenging set of concerns for the church in the present era. For instance, it authorized ordination of women into a priesthood containing patriarchs, which previous revelations plainly said descends from father to son.³⁵ Without even considering that and other problems relating to priesthood, which could have been done at the time, ordinations of women continue, and the Reorganization has been doing business as usual. This issue will have to be dealt with in the future, since the church missed an excellent opportunity to reconsider the fundamental nature of priesthood, its offices, and their interaction within the movement. Section 156 also authorizes standards and a review process for priesthood holders, all of which greatly enhance the concentration of power in the First Presidency and the institutional hierarchy. Strangely, this process was instituted by the very organization that has been telling everyone for the last three decades how badly the church needs to be more global, decentralized, inclusive, and pluralistic.³⁶ This section also sets up an important agenda item for the 1990s—the growth of institutional authority versus the individual prerogative that has been so much a part of the movement's history. Finally, the document mandates the building of a temple, a symbol of the Reorganization's roots in Mormonism, but that very temple was to be built by and for the people who had rid the church of whatever few reasons it ever had to build a temple. This, too, becomes an important area of concern for the decade of decision, as the movement must reshape itself for the next century or fold its tent. Section 156, therefore, is a manifestation of the church's inability thus far to deal with the Mormon/Protestant tensions that have historically been a part of the movement.

While only a symptom of a much larger concern, the 1984 revelation precipitated a fundamental schism in the RLDS church, as something on the order of 15,000 to 30,000 members who could not accommodate to the thrust of the institution recognized it as the last straw and withdrew. Although none of these people expressed the issue in quite this manner, the schism fundamentally arose over the Church's present cultural and theological "loss of identity."³⁷ The reformation has magnified a loss of that trajectory that links present with past and propels the church into the future. The RLDS situation is prompted by the fact that too many people have not understood the experiential nature of its rich tradition. The Reorganization is not just right thinking and doing; it is *feeling* that God is with us just as God was with the prophets and apostles of old. To be RLDS is not just to accept a set of books, a priesthood system, a bureaucracy, a theology, though those have been important symbols for the Saints. To be RLDS is to feel the burning in one's bosom, to personally ask of God and to pray for greater light and wisdom, to hear inspiring

preaching, to sing with heartfelt thanks, "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years," to feel the warmth of the Holy Spirit as the elders anoint and lay on hands for healing, to hope that the love and peace one felt during administration would someday pervade the entire world community as the kingdoms of this world are transformed into the kingdom of God. To be RLDS is to *feel* deep within one's being that one is linked with God's people from every age and to know the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit in one's own life and journey.³⁸

This deep sense of spirit, of spiritual vitality, that has such a strong tradition in the Reorganized Church has dwindled during the theological reformation. While the generation of Reorganization members who brought forth this reformation did so for good and just and Christian reasons, the changes have as yet been unable to replace the former ideological consensus with another that is as satisfying. The Apostle Paul gave up the Law but in its place found Jesus Christ and his grace. The Reorganization jettisoned most of its cultural, historical, and theological baggage but has thus far found little compelling or convincing to put in its place. The 1984 revelation elucidates the incompleteness of the reformation but also the promise that perhaps in the decade of decision the Reorganized Church will be able to realize some new potential that can be expressed in a new *Weltanschauung*.³⁹

A CLASSIC DILEMMA

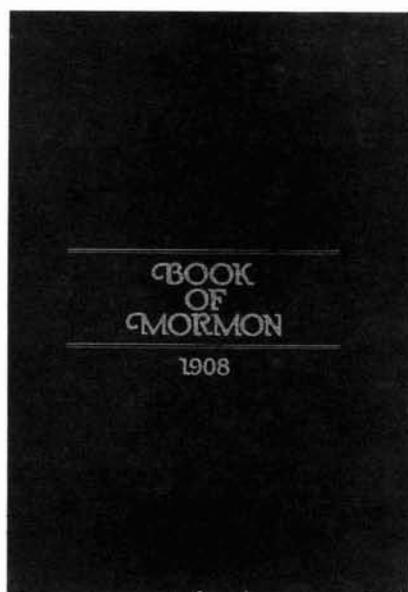
As the RLDS church undergoes the transition from sect to denomination, will it retain its singular Restoration identity or be subsumed into a larger Protestant conglomeration?

IN many respects, what the RLDS church has been experiencing during the past quarter-century is a classic evolution of the institution from sect to denomination. The result has been a gradual and at times not-so-gradual movement toward the middle of the religious spectrum, pulled by those who want to move that direction and even farther, and resisted by those who want to cling to the traditional ideological consensus that had been in place until the 1960s. Conservative RLDS members, themselves honest and forthright in their perceptions, have seen apostasy at every turn in the RLDS reformation. They cry out in anguish at the loss of the status of "a peculiar people" that the Reorganization has experienced in the last thirty years. They mourn for the loss of the very uniqueness that attracted them to the RLDS in the first place. The response of the leaders of the reformation, however, has been one of intolerance and a redoubling of efforts to continue the reformation through a serious demythologization of RLDS tradition, history, and theology.

As the two groups became alienated in the 1970s and early 1980s, they paired off in a series of increasingly desperate conflicts. The conservative forces felt themselves to be at the barricades of the gospel, seeking to turn back the seemingly inexorable tide of change within the church. Some of them saw conspiracies at every turn and felt themselves backed into a corner, where their only response to the onslaught of

Restoration demythologization was an increasingly uncompromising position that upheld the parameters of the traditional ideological consensus. The more strident the conservative resistance, the more determined the liberals became in achieving their reformation.⁴⁰ The demythologization of church history, theology, and assorted traditions reached crescendo proportions in the early 1980s, and the final great battle was over women's ordination. In every instance, the conservative elements lost the battle and in the process withdrew from the organization. In these events, distinctive restoration aspects were minimized. This has been the central dilemma of the RLDS church in the decade of decision, as it seeks to deal with its past and its future as the people in the middle, neither fully Protestant nor Mormon.

With what has gone before, the Reorganized Church must wrestle with two central questions about its identity in the 1990s. The first is the question of whether religious uniqueness, being "a peculiar people," is really important in the modern world, or whether it needlessly alienates the church from the larger U.S. society. Second, the RLDS church must consider how it differs from other Protestant denominations after the demythologization of the Restoration. The answers to these questions will shape the course of the RLDS church in either forging a new uniqueness as a Restoration church or its incorporation into a mellow Protestant conglomeration of churches without a distinctive identity. Although others have their own ideas on the subject, my answer to the first question is that there are plenty of Protestant churches available, and we have no need of another one. What is the point of maintaining a separate religious institution if it has nothing unique to offer the world? If the RLDS church is to be Methodist in orientation, I would prefer to be a Methodist; they are better at it than the RLDS could ever be. My answer to the second question is that even after the demythologization of the Restoration, I believe that there are distinctive points that matter and have value for our modern world.



While some have suggested that the RLDS church should formally repudiate the Book of Mormon, I think a reemphasis of the Book of Mormon could provide a valuable touchstone between our Mormon heritage and our future theology and mission.

(SOME) FUNDAMENTALS OF FAITH

The RLDS church might forge a new perspective for itself by reemphasizing revelation as more personal (and less institutional), and recasting the creation of Zion as the individual's responsibility to right injustice.

AFTER having analyzed where I think the RLDS church presently is in its institutional and social and theological life, and criticizing that position, I offer some fundamental ingredients in shaping a new religious outlook in the movement. It is one that has the potential to bring together the past and the future into a meaningful present. In this discussion, I will focus on Restoration aspects and not the RLDS church's deep commitment to Christianity. As a result, I will not focus on those areas held in common with other Christian denominations.

There are three distinctive Restoration concepts that deserve emphasis in the RLDS church and should be reinterpreted for the post-reformation era. These are essentially the same ones that Joseph Smith III stressed during his late-nineteenth-century presidency of the Reorganization. The first is a belief

in the Book of Mormon as scripture that provides a second witness of the message of the Jesus Christ. The second is an acceptance of the role of prophetic ministry in the present, both on personal and corporate levels. Finally, the concept of Zion holds especially significant possibilities in the present. I want to discuss these three Restoration "distinctives" briefly and suggest their importance for the RLDS in the decade of decision.

The historicity of the Book of Mormon has been under attack from without since nearly the beginning of the church and from within Mormonism for most of this century.⁴¹ There has been considerable concern about such statements, and the forces of traditional truth-claims about the book are now engaged in a struggle for how Latter-day Saints should interpret the scripture. This same issue has been played out within the RLDS church for the last quarter-century, with similar sides lining up in a sometimes vicious fight over the merits of the

scripture as a historical document.

For example, when developing the new Sunday School curriculum for the Reorganization in the latter part of the 1960s, Wayne Ham wrote a challenging paper that viewed the Book of Mormon as a work of fiction written by Joseph Smith as an expression of religious speculation.⁴² While some of those who question the book's historical origins have suggested that the RLDS church should formally repudiate the Book of Mormon in conference action, and have tried to prohibit its use in worship, many people, wisely, I think, have suggested that this would be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The Book of Mormon, while I do not believe it an authentic history of any group of ancient peoples in America, has a powerful message for the present-day RLDS church and the world. If there is one central theme in the book, it is the continual covenanting of God and humanity in a cyclical pattern: covenant / righteousness / turning from the gospel / falling away / covenanting anew. This pattern, coupled with the strong Christology of the Book of Mormon, makes a powerful statement of our worth in a world where human worth is everywhere questioned. I would agree with the conclusion of non-Mormon William P. Collins that, "When I examine the Book of Mormon for truth rather than facticity, my reading reveals powerful, eternal, and relevant truths which are capable of changing and guiding men's lives."⁴³

A reemphasis of the Book of Mormon among the RLDS (and it has been largely either soft-pedaled or ignored for the last twenty years) could provide a valuable touchstone between our Mormon heritage and our future theology and mission. This reemphasis need not be made on the earlier "truth" claims of the book as a literal translation of a record that contains the historical record of religious colony in ancient America. The claims of scripture can, and should, be made on the eternal message of the Book of Mormon, which many can testify of as being divinely inspired, notwithstanding the questions of its historicity and coming forth. I envision a revival among the RLDS using many of the ideas of the Book of Mormon, in the process helping to chart a future trajectory that is honest from historical and theological perspectives, viable from an institutional perspective, and honorable to our tradition.

My second "distinctive" has to do with the continuing nature of God's revelation in the modern era. The RLDS church has accepted this dictum almost as a postulate since its formation. Throughout the church's history, there has been a corporate commitment to revelation, with the president of the church delivering revelations nearly every two years at the world conference. Those revelations, called "documents" in official parlance, too often deal in platitudes and personnel changes and contain too little of what might be called eternal substance. Without question, the RLDS church has taken this approach toward revelation because of the circumstances of its evolution since the 1850s. Joseph Smith Jr. moved logically enough from a perception that there is no reason why God would have spoken in ancient times and not now. From there, he learned, and RLDS prophets have relearned, that they can always get their way within the institution if they invoke it as the

will of God—and may or may not if they don't.

I would much prefer to see the RLDS church reorient its historical perspective on revelation to allow it to be proclaimed more like the prophetic ministry of the ancient scriptures, with one called of God coming forward to lead the people to new heights of spirituality. In this setting, prophetic ministry might not come from the president of the church; indeed, perhaps it should not, since the president is the chief executive officer of the organization and is foremost concerned with the welfare of the institution. This would weaken the presidential office, of course, but it would also greatly broaden the spectrum of revelation beyond the narrow confines presently understood. It would also open the door for an overturning of the routinization process and force the RLDS out of its hidebound institutional cocoon. Prophetic ministry would then be more accessible to the membership, and while there would certainly be risks involved, there could also be great benefits.

Finally, the zionic quest is one of the most compelling ideas in the Restoration. Although the early Mormons interpreted Zion as theocratic empire, its most important attribute was that it shifted religious interest from the afterlife to the present. Long before the social gospel became an accepted part of Christianity, the Latter Day Saints were committed to helping to create a better and ultimately perfect society in which all lived together in harmony. Within the RLDS tradition, the concept of Zion has evolved to be sure, but its central message remains. It affirms that, in contrast to all the other adaptive and accommodationist institutions—religious and otherwise—that exist, the concept of Zion recognizes that those of us with the vision of a better world have a mission to bring it about. As RLDS, we cannot accept the injustices of humanity one to another and must strive to overcome them for the good of all. This Restoration "distinctive" calls us to be forces for the betterment of our communities, our nations, and, ultimately, the world. As theologian W. Paul Jones appropriately concluded, "Zion is the insistence that the kingdom of God is countercultural without being other-worldly. No message needs more to be heard in our time."⁴⁴

The RLDS can call upon this powerful distinctive ideal as a motivating force for the reformation of society, and all anyone has to do is read the newspaper, watch the news, or walk the streets of any large U.S. city to realize that society demands reformation. One of the most important aspects of the new RLDS temple in Independence is its dedication to the pursuit of peace.⁴⁵ It is a singularly exciting proposal and begins to get to the heart of the concept of Zion. But it is as yet an undigested idea that needs to be mixed with the larger ideal of Zion as a humane entity. At present, it remains an especially troubling aspect of the potential uses of the temple and of the RLDS church, as it functions only at the level of cliché.⁴⁶ The zionic endeavor can be resurrected and reinterpreted from the Restoration tradition into a powerful component of the RLDS mission in the next century.

CONCLUSION

To move into the future, the RLDS church must reconcile with its past.

AS I stated at the outset, the 1990s are a decade of decision for the Reorganized Church. Its leaders must decide finally, after a generation of theological reformation and misunderstanding and resultant disruption, what its role in the world of the future is to be and to build a consensus for that role among both the membership and the larger society. At the same time, a complete divorce from the past is impossible and, I believe, undesirable. A new construct of past and present is necessary, one which will enable the Reorganization to define itself and its mission. This redefinition of the Reorganization's role can meaningfully accent traditional distinctives such as the Book of Mormon, the idea of continuing revelation, and the zionic quest. What could emerge is a stronger, more dynamic Restoration church. I hope that the movement will recapture something of the experiential nature of the Restoration. I pray that it will find a trajectory, not necessarily the one formerly used, that links our present with our past and propels us into the future. ☐

NOTES

1. See Alma R. Blair, "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: Moderate Mormonism," in F. Mark McKiernan, Alma R. Blair, and Paul M. Edwards, eds., *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History* (Lawrence, Kans.: Coronado Press, 1973), 207–230; Clare D. Vlahos, "Moderation As a Theological Principle in the Thought of Joseph Smith III," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 1 (1981): 3–11; and William Dean Russell, "Defenders of the Faith: Varieties of RLDS Dissent," *SUNSTONE* 14:3 (June 1990), 14–19.

2. Clare D. Vlahos, "Images of Orthodoxy," in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos, eds., *Restoration Studies I* (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 184. On the Reorganized Church's reformation, see Larry W. Conrad and Paul Shupe, "An RLDS Reformation? Construing the Task of RLDS Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (summer 1985): 92–103.

3. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion: Volume 1, The Irony of It All, 1893–1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 119–120.

4. This circumstance is pointed out in Albert L. Loving, *When I Put Out to See: The Autobiography of Albert Loving* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1974), the recollections of a long-time appointee minister; and in F. Henry Edwards, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1973), 6:614.

This situation began to change in the 1960s. For instance, a study in the late 1960s revealed that 56.65 percent of all church families sampled had a gross income of \$8,000 or more—43.63 percent had incomes over \$10,000—when the comparable median family income for the United States in 1970 was only \$8,734. (Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *Report of the Commission on Education*, April 1970, 64, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Library-Archives, Independence; *Information Please Almanac* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980], 42.) This trend placed the United States membership firmly in the middle class. I am indebted to W. B. "Pat" Spillman for bringing this information to my attention. See also, W. B. Spillman, "Dissent and the Future of the Church," in Roger D. Launius and W. B. Spillman, eds., *Let Contention Cease: The Dynamics of Dissent in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, MO: Graceland/Park Press, 1991), 276.

5. I recall missionaries in the American Southeast visiting our area in the early 1960s, my father taking them out to buy a new suit or paying to have their automobile repaired. I especially remember him slipping them a \$20 bill with the instruction that this was extra and should not be reported as contributions to the church.

6. To demonstrate the rise in the appointee standard of living, between 1956 and 1964, full-time church personnel salaries and other stipends rose 43 percent

per appointee and averaged \$11,195 per appointee. "Appointee Compensation," 1968, Walter N. Johnson Papers, P67, f6, Reorganized Church Library-Archives. See also Spillman, "Dissent and the Future of the Church," 276–77.

7. This information is taken from W. B. Spillman, "Dissent and the Future of the Church," in Launius and Spillman, eds., *Let Contention Cease*, 277–285.

8. On the careers of these men, see Larry E. Hunt, *F. W. Smith: Saint As Reformer* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1982); Paul M. Edwards, *The Chief: An Administrative Biography of Frederick M. Smith* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1988); and Norma Derry Hiles, *Gentle Monarch: An Administrative Biography of Israel A. Smith* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1991).

9. On this issue, see Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918–1931* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954); Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Willard J. Gatewood Jr., ed., *Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969); Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 1*; and George R. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

10. *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1970 ed.), section 145. This revelation was given in April 1958. On the personalities of these men, except Cheville, see their Oral History Memoirs in the Reorganized Church Library-Archives. On the historical development and responsibilities of the Presiding Patriarch, see Reed M. Holmes, *The Patriarchs* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1978). I am indebted to William D. Russell for much of this information.

11. Richard B. Lancaster and Clifford Buck graduated in 1965 from Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri, the first Reorganization graduates of the Methodist-sponsored seminary. Both men were church appointees assigned to the Department of Religious Education at the Auditorium, Independence.

12. This issue, and the fundamentalist backlash from it, is explored in an outstanding article. See William J. Knapp, "Professionalizing Religious Education in the Church: The New Curriculum Controversy," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 2 (1982): 47–59. See also Donald D. Landon, "A Question of Means or Ends: The Debate over Religious Education," *SUNSTONE* 10:8 (1986): 21–23, which provides a defense of efforts to modernize the church's curriculum by a key participant in the process.

13. Garland E. Tickemyer, *The Old Testament Speaks to Our Day* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1960–1961), four quarterlies for high school students. On Tickemyer's theological ideas, see his "A Study of Some Representative Concepts of a Finite God in Contemporary American Philosophy with Application to the God Concepts of the Utah Mormons," M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1954. These ideas have been boiled down and perhaps added to in Garland E. Tickemyer, "Joseph Smith and Process Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (autumn 1984): 75–85.

14. James E. Lancaster, "By the Gift and Power of God," *Saints Herald* 109 (15 November 1962): 798–802, 806, 817; reprinted with minor revisions in the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 51–61.

15. An example of the traditional Reorganization understanding is that of Clair E. Weldon, "Two Transparent Stones: The Story of the Urim and Thummim," *Saints Herald* 109 (1 September 1962): 616–620, 623.

16. Lloyd R. Young, "Concerning the Virgin Birth: Comments on the Doctrine," *Saints Herald* 111 (1 February 1964): 77–78, 94.

17. See, as examples, F. Henry Edwards, *For Such a Time* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1963); Roy A. Cheville, *Spirituality in the Space Age* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1962); William R. Clinefelter, *The Covenant and the Kingdom* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1964).

18. These younger faculty included Lloyd R. Young, Paul M. Edwards, Robert Speaks, Leland Negaard, Robert Bruce Flanders, and Alma R. Blair. Speaks and Negaard had graduate degrees from two of the leading Protestant theological seminaries in the United States, the University of Chicago and Union Theological Seminary in New York. Robert Flanders, a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin, especially, excited the ire of the more traditional Saints by suggesting that, among other things, Joseph Smith Jr. had instituted the Mormon practice of polygamy. See Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965). Seventy A. M. Pelletier wrote an open letter to the Joint Council in 1967, saying that "The only book I have ever openly criticized is Flander's *Nauvoo: The Kingdom on the Mississippi*. I have heard of some of our leaders praising it and a couple even going so far as to say, 'This book will do more to break the Smith Dynasty than anything ever written.' I take objection to such statements" (A. M. Pelletier to All Members of the Joint Council, 29 May 1967,

Walter N. Johnson Papers, 1905–1980, 67, f17, Reorganized Church Library-Archives). See also, William D. Russell, "The Fundamentalist Schism, 1958–Present," in Launius and Spillman, eds., *Let Contention Cease*, 130–31.

19. Donald D. Landon, *A History of Donald D. Landon while under General Conference Appointment, 1951–1970: An Oral History Memoir* (Independence: Department of History, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1970), 94.

20. Knapp, "Professionalizing Religious Education," 49.

21. RLDS Doctrine and Covenants 43:4; LDS D&C 43:15.

22. William D. Russell, "Reorganized Mormons Beset by Controversy," *Christian Century*, 17 June 1970, 770.

23. Many members of the Department of Religious Education were liberal, especially since the Reformation in the 1960s. Most had also been educated in Protestant seminaries. Verne Sparks was a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York; Geoffrey F. Spencer and Wayne Ham were graduates of Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City. They had already begun to comment on the theology of the church and press for a more non-Mormon interpretation. See Verne Sparks, *The Theological Enterprise* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1969). Ham did much the same by taking seriously the claims of other religions in *Man's Living Religions* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1966).

24. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *Exploring the Faith* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1970). This book's individual chapters had been published in the *Saints Herald* in the 1960s as a means of informing the church membership about the ideas it contained.

25. *Report of the Commission on Education*, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, April 1970, 116. See also Knapp, "Professionalizing Religious Education."

26. Pelletier to Joint Council, 29 May 1967.

27. On the reformation, see Roger Yarrington, "Changes in the Church," *Saints Herald* 137 (September 1990): 10.

28. Charles D. Neff, "The Church and Culture," *Saints Herald* 119 (December 1972): 13–14, 51–52. See also Clifford A. Cole, "The World Church: Our Mission in the 1980s," *Commission*, September 1979, 42; "The Joseph Smith Saints," *Life*, 2 May 1960, 63–66; Charles D. Neff, "The Problem of Becoming a World Church," *Saints Herald* 121 (September 1974): 554–57.

29. Clifford A. Cole, "Theological Perspectives of World Mission," *Saints Herald* 118 (July 1971): 11.

30. This expansion has been best described in Maurice L. Draper, *Isles and Continents* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1982).

31. Accounts of these missionary conversions, demonstrating that many were from Christian non-Westerners, can be found in Draper, *Isles and Continents*.

32. Book of Doctrine and Covenants (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1986 ed.), section 156.

33. An inkling of the importance of this decision can be found in Paul M. Edwards, "RLDS Priesthood: Structure and Process," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (autumn 1984): 6–11; L. Madelon Brunson, "Strangers in a Strange Land: A Personal Response to the 1984 Document," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (autumn 1984): 11–17; Jill Mulvay Derr, "An Endowment of Power: The LDS Tradition," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17 (autumn 1984): 17–21; Velma Ruch, "To Magnify Our Calling: A Personal Response to Section 156," in Maurice L. Draper and Debra Combs, eds., *Restoration Studies III* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 97–107.

34. *Guidelines for Priesthood* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1985).

35. RLDS Doctrine and Covenants, sections 104 and 130.

36. On the subject of the church's direction, see Clifford A. Cole, "The World Church: Our Mission in the 1980s," 39–44; and Clifford A. Cole, *The Mighty Hand of God* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1984).

37. This analysis is based on a critique of Reorganization theology written by Larry W. Conrad, whom I thank for his insights into this area. See Larry W. Conrad, "Dissent among Dissenters: Theological Dimensions of Dissent in the Reorganization," in Roger D. Launius and W. B. "Pat" Spillman, eds., *Let Contention Cease: The Dynamics of Dissent in the Reorganized Church* (Independence: Graceland/Park Press, 1991), 199–239.

38. See letter from Larry W. Conrad to Roger D. Launius, 15 January 1990, copy in possession of author.

39. Howard J. Booth, "Recent Shifts in Restoration Thought," *Restoration Studies I*, 162–75; Larry W. Conrad and Paul Shupe, "An RLDS Reformation? Construing the Task of RLDS Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (summer 1985): 92–103.

40. See Roger D. Launius, "At the Barricades of the Gospel: The Conspiracy Theme in RLDS History," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 13 (1993):

3–17.

41. There is evidence that, in the early part of this century, B. H. Roberts, perhaps the greatest LDS intellectual, questioned the book's historicity as an actual document portraying the record of people calling themselves Nephites, but this was not widely circulated until the 1980s. (See B. H. Roberts, *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brigham D. Madsen, [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985]; Truman G. Madsen, "B. H. Roberts and the Book of Mormon," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 [summer 1979]: 427–45; "New B. H. Roberts Book Lacks Insight of His Testimony," *Deseret News*, 15 December 1985; John W. Welch, "B. H. Roberts, Seeker after Truth," *Ensign* 16 (March 1986): 56–62; and Brigham D. Madsen, "B. H. Roberts's Studies of the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26 [fall 1993]: 76–86.)

More recently, a book edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe seriously questioned the historicity of the Book of Mormon. One essayist bluntly summarized the central issue tackled in this book: "Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should confess in faith that the Book of Mormon is the word of God but also abandon claims that it is a historical record of the ancient peoples of the Americas." (Anthony A. Hutchinson, "The Word of God Is Enough: The Book of Mormon As Nineteenth-Century Scripture," in Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993], 1.)

42. Wayne Ham, "Problems in Interpreting the Book of Mormon As History," *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 1 (September 1970): 15–22.

43. William P. Collins, "Thoughts on the Mormon Scriptures: An Outsider's View of the Inspiration of Joseph Smith," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Autumn 1982): 53.

44. W. Paul Jones, "Demythologizing and Symbolizing the RLDS Tradition," *Restoration Studies V* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1993): 111.

45. RLDS Doctrine and Covenants 156:5.

46. The emphasis on this aspect of the work of the church has reached significant proportions since 1984. In 1986, for instance, the church sponsored an interdenominational Peace Symposium at the Kirtland Temple to try to come to grips with some of these issues. See Bruce Jones, ed., *Becoming Makers of Peace: The Peace Symposium at Kirtland, Ohio, June 20–21, 1986* (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1987).



WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES, AN IMAGE

It comes from childhood winters,
from Wyoming aluminum frost,
my hunched shoulders
hauling out cinders
to empty in snow.
It comes from black boots and gloves,
the tin bucket lifted
with dark embryos of meaning inside,
the muffled hiss at upturning,
white edges disappearing around darkness.
It comes in frigid hours,
beyond intention, beyond control,
a blackness settling in,
the hot hard dark
against soft white,
what life has in store for us,
what dark knowledge we need
huddled up again.

—ANITA TANNER