

Coming of Age? The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the 1960s

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THE 1960S IN THE UNITED STATES was a decade probably best described as tumultuous, confrontational, bewildering, but also uniquely exalting. During the period a long-standing national culture appeared to crumble, and conflict on a myriad of levels became common. At virtually every level of human interaction—political, economic, social, cultural, military—proven formulae were cast aside in favor of other, although not necessarily better, approaches.¹ In many respects the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints of the 1960s mirrored the general tumult, if not the details, of the larger American society. For reasons similar to those prompting change in the United States, the Reorganization also wrestled, seemingly for the first time, with questions which fundamentally altered its structure and pattern of behavior. It was for the Reorganized Church a coming of age whose impact will be permanently embedded in the core of the movement. It represented a growth of maturity as well as a loss of innocence. As such it was both the best and worst of episodes through which the Reorganized Church has passed. This essay explores some of the themes and trends that are representative of the transformation of the Reorganization during this era.

1. Anyone wishing to pursue the reorientation of American society in the 1960s should read Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979); Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); William L. O'Neill, *Coming Apart* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971); and Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1976).

Perhaps the central theme of American religion in the twentieth century has been its encounter with modernity—the changes to the sets of priorities, assumptions, and values present in recent society largely in cultural response to emerging concepts in science, technology, economics, politics, philosophy, and the overall *weltanschauung*. The response to modernity, according to Martin E. Marty, fundamentally changed the landscape of American religions. He 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.”² While Marty was concerned specifically with reactions in the early twentieth century, the Reorganized Church began to wrestle seriously with the issue of modernity in the 1960s. This concern took several twists in the decade, but by the end of the period 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.

Fundamentally, the Reorganized Church’s changes of the 1960s were a response to and in many ways an embracing of developments of American society after World War II.³ The experience of war, the acceptance of responsibilities on the world stage, the rapid development of technology in the form of communications and other benefits, the economic good times of most Americans, the breakdown of traditional ideas and the development of new paradigms, and a host of less tangible events all fundamentally affected the Reorganization.⁴

AMERICAN SOCIAL FERMENT

The unrest in the United States during the 1960s has been discussed in detail in many places. The Reorganized Church participated in this process probably as fully as most other religious institutions. Indicative of the recognition of social concerns, at the 1964 World Conference the

2. Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion: Volume 1, The Irony of It All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), flyleaf.

3. A useful discussion of how the Reorganization has developed in the twentieth century can be found in Barbara Higdon, “The Reorganization in the Twentieth Century,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7 (Spring 1972): 94-100; Roger D. Launius, “A New Historiographical Frontier: The Reorganized Church in the Twentieth Century,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 6 (1986): 53-63.

4. This shift has been demonstrated in numerous cases. See Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1955).

body of Saints passed a resolution directed toward affecting the world around them: "*Resolved*, That this Conference urge the First Presidency with such assistance as they may require from the quorums, councils, and orders of the church, to prepare or cause to be prepared statements of principle to submit to future World Conferences for the guidance of church members in meeting current social, economic, and moral problems . . ."5 Although concern for the wider issues at play in society was present before this time, this action focused more fully than ever before the church's attention on the issues of inequality, inexactitude, and incoherence in American society. That it was, at least in part, a response to the turmoil around them seems apparent. Apostle Clifford A. Cole remarked that this "was a period when many persons were becoming disillusioned with the idea that science could solve humanity's problems. Many felt that the economic, political, and social structures of society were no longer adequate." In this environment it was incumbent upon the church to seek a new balance, and Cole and other leaders moved out on several fronts to do so.⁶ The church expended resources and used its publications to consider these issues and how the Saints might make the world a better place. The decade was probably the most enlightened period in the church's recent history for concern about moral and social issues, and activism in all manner of concerns among the Saints, albeit with mixed results, became increasingly common.

In March 1966 the First Presidency published a statement on "The Church and the Social Order," which responded to some of the issues of the era and offered a guide for the actions of Latter Day Saints. A moderate statement, it nonetheless suggested that "The church exists among men and for men. It can never shut the world out," and that the members must be about good works to raise the level of society. It also noted that "the social order is the kingdom of God: the realm in which the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, where the will of God becomes the will and directing force of men." The presidency suggested that the Saints should work to eliminate such "spiritual disorders as greed, jealousy, and resentment." It commented on several specific areas then being considered in the social ferment of the era: the responsibilities of the church and members in the social order, guidelines for Christian social action, the importance of the family not just as an entity but as a place where critical needs of both a spiritual and physical nature can be met in total safety, sexual ethics, the responsibilities of citizens to support the government, the rule of law, the issue of war and peace, and the racial

5. *Rules and Resolutions* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1045.

6. Clifford A. Cole, "World Church: Our Mission in the 1980s," *Commission*, Sept. 1979, 43.

crisis.⁷ At every point the presidency recommended greater efforts to educate rather than legislate on social issues, calling “for maturing of understanding through study and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

The church’s periodical, the *Saints’ Herald*, continued to discuss many of these important social issues throughout the remainder of the decade.⁹ W. Wallace Smith, president of the Reorganization, really began this effort in his World Conference sermon of 1966, “Our Hope and Our Salvation.” Typically a “State of the Church” address, in this presentation he devoted considerable attention to the social questions being raised and urged the church to meet the needs of the generation. “Platitudes and pleasantries are not sufficient to meet the needs of our generation,” he said, and commented that the Saints must offer leadership in bringing good to the world.¹⁰ Thereafter a series of articles on “Social, Moral, and Religious Issues” began appearing in the *Saints’ Herald* to consider specific problems in society: inequality, welfare, civil rights, science, and a multitude of other topics drawing the church into the larger debate taking place in America.¹¹ In addition there were numerous special issues treating various aspects of the social issues of the world.¹² These and other efforts of a less tangible nature helped reorient the church by the end of the decade from what it had been called by a *Time* reporter, “a fossilized, forgotten

7. First Presidency, “The Church and the Social Order,” *Saints’ Herald* 113 (15 Mar. 1966): 186-89, 198-99.

8. First Presidency, “Editorial Comment on the Church and the Social Order,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Mar. 1966): 185.

9. This had been present before 1966, but it took off after the First Presidency’s emphasis. See Roy A. Cheville, “Mormonism on the Move,” *ibid.* 111 (1 Jan. 1964): 10-12; Richard B. Lancaster, “The Contemporary Christ: The Relevance of the Doctrine of the Resurrection,” *ibid.* 111 (15 Mar. 1964): 186-87; Raymond R. Broadfoot, “The Restoration Church in the Space Age,” *ibid.* 111 (1 Apr. 1964): 221-22, 235; First Presidency, “Our Position on Race and Color,” *ibid.* 110 (1 Aug. 1963): 506; Paul A. Wellington, “The Restoration Attitude Towards Race,” *ibid.* 110 (15 Nov. 1963): 770; William D. Russell, “Martin Luther King: Satan or Saint?” *ibid.* 110 (1 July 1963): 434.

10. W. Wallace Smith, “Our Hope and Our Salvation,” *ibid.* 113 (15 May 1966): 330-33, 343.

11. James Tice, “The Poverty Program—Its Relationship to Zionism,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Apr. 1966): 260-62; G.R. Westwood, “The Dilemma in Human Values,” *ibid.* 113 (1 Aug. 1966): 522-25; Cecil L. Eubanks, “The God of History Is on the Move,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Aug. 1966): 548-49; Gerald Gabriel, “Inequality in a World of Plenty,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Sept. 1966): 618-20; Mark Dievendorf, “Welfare—Boon or Burden?” *ibid.* 113 (1 Oct. 1966): 659, 670; Verne Sparkes, “Sinful Man and the Civil Rights Dilemma,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Oct. 1966): 690-91, 701-702; Jack Soldner, “The Importance of Purpose,” *ibid.* 113 (15 Nov. 1966): 766-67, 780; Eldon S. Ratcliffe, “Change,” *ibid.* 113 (1 Dec. 1966): 801, 813.

12. As examples, see “The Vietnam Involvement” issue, *ibid.* 113 (1 Feb. 1966); “The War on Poverty” issue, *ibid.* 113 (15 Apr. 1966); “The Church and the World” issue, *ibid.* 113 (1 Aug. 1966).

sect," into a more dynamic institution that was concerned with much more than just itself.¹³ While the strides made were always moderate, without this gradual reorientation there is some question that the organization would have been able to survive the tumult pressuring it from without and within.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

During the years following World War II the Reorganized Church's membership, at least in North America where more than 90 percent of members still reside, participated in a rapid rise in economic status. This advance in economic position was especially manifest in the 1960s. In large measure, however, this resulted from the general growth of the American economy and the changes this wrought in society. Because of this, the years since World War II marked a period of 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 time the Reorganized Saints particularly appealed to the poor and working classes of industrial Western civilization as "have nots" were attracted to its zionic message and its socially egalitarian system. F. Henry Edwards summarized this historic position in the Reorganization:

Because the church was poor, proselyting was chiefly among the poor. Local missionary enterprises were almost never adequately financed, and in many urban situations the best housing that could be secured was a home, an upper room, or a storefront. Hundreds of honest, thrifty, and industrious but poor people joined the church but, with few exceptions, neither their resources, their education, nor their experience elsewhere qualified them to manage the business of the church as a means to freedom and power.¹⁴

As a result those serving the church on a full-time basis had been virtually destitute, with the church providing to appointee families exceptionally small allowances to supplement what the family could produce for itself. This approach had tended to reinforce itself as poor appointee ministers from the general church's devout but economically poor rank-and-file worked largely among people they knew best, other economically disadvantaged individuals. Poor begat poor in a seemingly endless circle. This was an uncomfortable if generally tolerable situation as long as the Saints, the appointee missionaries, and the church's missionary pros-

13. "The Other Saints," *Time*, 29 Apr. 1966, 74.

14. F. Henry Edwards, *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1973), 6:614.

pects, and expectations remained pretty much equal.¹⁵

This situation had obviously changed by the 1960s. Even as the church tried to maintain the image of a working-class institution it was an increasingly inaccurate assessment as time passed. 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 \$8,734.¹⁶ This placed the United States' membership firmly in the middle class. Moreover, in the early part of the twentieth century most Reorganized Church branches met in rented quarters or in members' homes. By the 1960s most branches in the United States had their own facilities, many worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition, the church's budgets in the period, even when adjusted for inflation, show remarkable growth, as shown in Table 1. Table 2 contains a list of the rise in tithes and offerings for the 1960s. From these observations, it is apparent that by the 1960s the church in North America was no longer constituted largely of lower- and working-class families.

Table 1. Reorganized Church Expenditures

Category	1960 Amount	1960 %	1970 Amount	1970 %
Ministerial	1,480,130	61.86	2,945,003	61.11
General Admin.	670,115	28.01	1,189,373	24.68
Education	193,600	8.10	581,446	12.07
Historical				
Properties	22,900	.95	54,000	1.12
Miscellaneous	21,850	.91	49,200	1.02
Total	2,392,655	100.00	4,819,023	100.00

(Source: Statistics Department and Data Records reports in World Conference Reports and Minutes published for conferences, RLDS Library-Archives.)

Table 2. Reorganized Church Tithes and Offerings

Year	Contributions	Percent Increase Over Previous Year
1960	\$2,709,750.02	—

15. This circumstance is pointed up in Albert L. Loving, *When I Put Out to See: The Autobiography of Albert Loving* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1974), the recollections of a longtime appointee minister.

16. Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *Report of the Commission on Education*, Apr. 1970, 64, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Library-Archives, Independence, MO; *Information Please Almanac* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 42.

1961	\$2,871,804.85	6.0
1962	\$3,225,958.50	12.4
1963	\$3,387,413.45	5.0
1964	\$3,566,290.11	5.3
1965	\$3,829,069.46	7.4
1966	\$3,940,925.17	2.9
1967	\$4,407,145.89	11.8
1968	\$4,565,122.70	3.5
1969	\$3,928,214.03	-15.3

(Source: *First Presidency to Appointee and others*, 26 Mar. 1969, *First Presidency Records*, RG9, f77, RLDS Library-Archives; *World Church Conference Reports*, 1970.)

As the church membership transitioned from the lower to the middle class during the latter half of the twentieth century, it brought a similar transition into 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 miserly. To emphasize its thrifty use of contributors' tithing the church published by name all appointee expenses and family allowances in the *Conference Daily Bulletin* until 1958. Not even the general officers, including the First Presidency, were immune from such publicity.¹⁷

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 they permitted better than ever before in the decade, the institutional 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. The effect of these actions was to place the standard of living of appointee families squarely into the American middle class. 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, as shown in Table 3. In addition, in 1968 church appointees received an average annual allowance per family of \$7,746.72, near the national average, with another \$3,448.28 paid by the church for travel, moving, retirement, and other expenses. This meant that the church paid an average of \$11,195 per appointee.¹⁸ Moreover, if the wife was employed, an increasing likelihood of modern life, her earn-

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

18. "Appointee Compensation," 1968, Walter N. Johnson Papers, P67, f6, Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

ings began to be considered during the decade on top of the husband's church allowances, giving many appointee families a family income well into upper-middle-class standards.

Table 3. Reorganized Church Cost Per Month
for Appointee Allowances, 1956-64

1956	\$341.91
1957	\$383.99
1958	\$375.99
1959	\$367.17
1960	\$402.08
1961	\$413.08
1962	\$442.84
1963	\$456.72
1964	\$488.80

(Source: "Appointee Compensation and Policies," n.d. [1965], Walter N. Johnson Papers, P67, f6, RLDS Library-Archives.)

A change in appointment policy was accelerated by and in turn probably itself accelerated this trend. For the first time employment with the church was economically rewarding enough to attract the best educated and most capable men the church had in its ranks. Always before the necessity of earning a living for a family prohibited some exceptionally talented people from serving full time. Increasingly, better educated and more capable people began to fill the appointee ranks. They brought a wider perspective to their work than had earlier generations. Many also came into appointment with considerable financial resources to augment their church incomes. The result placed the church's appointee leaders in a position of substantial financial health, with a concomitant stake in maintaining stability and respectability in the surrounding society. In addition, it set in motion a rise in careerism in the institutional church, and since that time the development of full-time bureaucrats has expanded with all the attendant advantages and drawbacks of such a system.

This new-found wealth perhaps did not cause but certainly abetted a greater openness to Protestantism and accommodation to modern society than was ever present in the church before. As W. B. Spillman wrote,

The more wealth one has, the less likely one is to promote policies that may threaten it; the more integrated one is within society, the less motivation one has to radically alter it. As the church and its leaders moved securely into the North American middle class, it naturally began to see tension and apartness from society as potentially damaging to its newly acquired status and bureaucratic stability. The church found itself with an increasing interest in maintaining stability and peace with the surrounding culture.

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, and in many respects, inimical to society as a whole, the church in the latter 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 which prompted the church in that direction as well, a subject to which we now turn our attention.¹⁹

THEOLOGICAL REFORMATION

Concomitant with the economic development issue in the church, and closely related to it, was a radical theological reformation in the Reorganization. Beginning in the 1950s and truly felt in the 1960s, Reorganization liberals emerged to engage in the steady dismantling of what had been a traditional Reorganized Church theological consensus. That consensus had been built on the tensions 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 Protestantism, on the other.²⁰ These tensions had been held in creative balance prior to the 1960s when leading church members began to challenge all manner of beliefs about the movement's history and theology and steadily moved from a position which argued that the Reorganized Church was the only *true* church to one asserting that the Reorganization was only one *true* church among many.²¹ This theological and historical reformation struck at the very core and essence of the Reorganized

19. 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* (Independence, MO: Graceland-Park Press, 1991), 276-77.

20. 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, KS: Coronado Press, 1973), 207-30; Clare D. Vlahos, "Moderation as a Theological Principle in the Thought of Joseph Smith III," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 1 (1981): 3-11.

21. Howard J. Booth, "Recent Shifts in Restoration Thought," in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos, eds., *Restoration Studies I* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 162-75. For further evidence of these changes, compare the *Position Papers* (Independence, MO: Cumorah Books, 1975), or *Exploring the Faith* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970), with William H. Kelley, *Presidency and Priesthood: The Apostasy, Reformation, and Restoration* (Lamoni, IA: Herald Publishing House, 1908), and Joseph F. Luff, *The Old Jerusalem Gospel* (Lamoni, IA: Herald Publishing House, 1903). On the Reorganized church's reformation, see Larry W. Conrad and Paul Shupe, "An RLDS Reformation? Constructing the Task of RLDS Theology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18 (Summer 1985): 92-103.

Church's origins and reasons for existence since the 1850s.

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 mainly a difference 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 fundamentals on which the church was based. Under his successor, Israel A. Smith, president between 1946 and 1958, the church increased reliance on secular education as a path to greater professionalism. Israel Smith accepted the Department of Religious Education's plans to broaden the preparation of its staff and Sunday school teachers. He also created the School of the Restoration to provide specialized leadership training for ministry, but this school offered much more than pastoral training and leadership seminars as its students were encouraged to study seriously church history and theology in light of outside scholarship.²²

This 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.²³ The seeds of theological debate were harvested during the presidency of W. Wallace Smith, 1958-78, 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 thoughtful 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 Patri-

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

23. See Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931* (New Haven, CT: 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, TN: Abingdon, 1969); Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 1*; George R. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

arch.²⁴ All were important agents of change.

The educational impetus present in the church brought by these men, as well as by others who entered the appointee force near the same time who were generally better educated than the church's rank-and-file, clearly set the stage for radical reformation in Wallace Smith's presidency. Increasing numbers of key staff members had graduate, usually theological, degrees, and they encouraged others to broaden their vistas in similar fashion. For instance, several staff people at church headquarters in Independence began to take graduate courses at the Saint Paul School of Theology, a Methodist seminary in Kansas City, when it began operation in 1959.²⁵

Formal theological training of church staff members had a liberalizing effect on the materials developed for Sunday school and on the articles published in the *Saints' Herald*.²⁶ These trends were apparent at least as early as the fall of 1960 when the Religious Education Department published an Old Testament course for senior high students. Written by Garland E. Tickemyer, the course embraced an evolutionary and mythological view of the Old Testament. Tickemyer, who had written a master's thesis on Joseph Smith's process theology at the University of Southern California and was then president of the High Priests' Quorum, approached the subject from the standpoint of higher criticism, and this publication 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.²⁷

24. *Book of Doctrine and Covenants* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1970 ed.), Sec. 145. This revelation was given in April 1958. On the personalities of these men, except Chevillie, 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, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1978).

25. Richard B. Lancaster and Clifford Buck graduated from Saint Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Missouri, in 1965, 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, Missouri.

26. This issue, and the fundamentalist backlash from it, is explored in an outstanding article: 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 (1986): 21-23, which provides a defense of efforts to modernize the church's curriculum by a key participant in the process.

27. Garland E. Tickemyer, *The Old Testament Speaks to Our Day* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1960-61), four quarterlies for senior high 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.

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 outgoing editor had fully exercised his license and rejected articles if they were "not in harmony" with traditional Reorganization teachings. The new editor, Roger Yarrington, did not see his editorial role as that of a protector of the traditional faith and allowed a much wider divergence of ideas to be presented. Because of this there were several liberal articles in the *Saints' Herald* in the early 1960s. Probably the two most controversial were written by James E. Lancaster and Lloyd R. Young. Lancaster, in an 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 used by looking into it in the bottom of a hat while the plates were under cover on a nearby table.²⁸ This was contrary to what many Reorganized Latter Day Saints believed about Joseph translating the golden plates through a spectacle-like Urim and Thummim.²⁹ Lloyd R. Young's theological article, "Concerning the Virgin Birth," questioned the historical evidence for Mary's virginity at the time of Jesus' birth using the tools of modern scholarship.³⁰ Letters protesting these articles streamed into Herald House, the church's publisher. In similar fashion and with equally provocative reactions, several book-length publications from the church's press began to reflect more liberal ideas during the early 1960s as well.³¹

In the same period the church's only institution of higher learning and a traditional place of Restoration theological inquiry, Graceland College, hired new faculty members to teach religion, philosophy, and history. Each of these new faculty was young, had been trained in secular educational institutions, and was somewhat liberal in his 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. Church officials often heard criticism of these faculty for undermining the faith of students in the

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

29. 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 Sept. 1962): 616-20, 623.

30. Lloyd R. Young, "Concerning the Virgin Birth: Comments on the Doctrine," *ibid.* 111 (1 Feb. 1964): 77-78, 94.

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

1960s.³²

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 series of three private seminars in 1967 with the eighteen members of the church's Joint Council of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and Presiding Bishopric conducted by theologian Paul Jones and religious historian Carl Bangs, both of whom were members of Kansas City's Saint Paul School of Theology. These individuals gave a new slant to familiar problems in the Reorganization by defining them in the context of Protestantism.³³ The seminars incorporated symbols and explanations from the larger Christian community rather than emphasizing traditional concerns of the Reorganized Church. One important part of these men's emphasis was the lessening of the standard "true church" concept of the Reorganization, stressing that any church was "true" only to the extent that it reflected the spirit and personality of Jesus Christ.³⁴ Some church members, not surprisingly, were appalled by these seminars which contradicted the Doctrine and Covenants (34:4) direction to go forth into the world and to "teach" and not "to be taught." 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."³⁵

Second, the development and presentation of a set of theological papers, called "Position Papers," in 1969 for use in developing new Sunday

32. 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 respectively. 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 of the First Presidency, Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and Presiding Bishopric in 1967 which said that "The only book I have every openly criticized is Flanders'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" (Pelletier to All Members of the Joint Council, 29 May 1967, Walter N. Johnson Papers, 1905-80, P67, f17, Reorganized Church Library-Archives).

33. Donald D. Landon, *A History of Donald D. Landon While Under General Conference Appointment, 1951-1970: An Oral History Memoir* (Independence, MO: Department of History, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1970), 94.

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

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

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.³⁶ They annihilated many of the traditional theological conceptions of the Reorganization and presented an interpretation of the church as a mainline Protestant denomination. As one example, in a paper on the Book of Mormon the author viewed the book as a work of fiction written by Joseph Smith as an expression of religious speculation.³⁷

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 most unique aspects and stressed those more characteristic of "orthodox" Christian denominations. The foreword to the book pointed up 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.³⁸

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 a whole new world of religious inquiry was opened to these church officials, 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 advance of the church. A schism among the membership developed at that point as educated elites began to move

36. Many members of the Department of Religious Education were liberal, especially for the Reorganization 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, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1969). Ham did much the same by taking seriously the claims of other religions in *Man's Living Religions* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1966).

37. Wayne Ham, "Problems in Interpreting the Book of Mormon as History," *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 1 (Sept. 1970): 15-22.

38. *Exploring the Faith* (Independence, MO: 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.

the church in a direction not understood by some of its appointees and 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 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 B.D. 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."³⁹

This dichotomy began to be seen quickly in the church's appointee force in the latter 1960s. Many field ministers, especially members of the Quorum of Seventy, began to rebel against what they perceived as a demphasis of Restoration distinctiveness, 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 the decade, was an old school Reorganization member. Most of his education and training had been independent or 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.⁴⁰

Significantly, Pelletier left the church in the early-1970s in part over the theological reformation taking place. In one explanation of this theological reformation, *Saints Herald* editor Roger Yarrington recently commented, "The church has changed, is changing, but not its central beliefs

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

40. Pelletier to Joint Council, 29 May 1967.

which, when addressed to a changing world, are still vital and are still being taught, believed, and lived."⁴¹

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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 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.⁴² 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.⁴³

Because of its increased financial resources brought on by the economic well-being of its North American membership and because of the

41. Roger Yarrington, "Changes in the Church," *Saints Herald* 137 (Sept. 1990): 10.

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

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

general movement of Americans beyond national boundaries in large numbers in the post-World War II period for the first time, during the 1960s the Reorganized Church opened mission work in twelve new non-English speaking countries, more than doubling the number of those nations in which the church was operating (see Table 4). Previously, the church had not opened work in a non-English speaking nation since 1875, when it sent missionaries to Scandinavia. This effort took place following the creation in 1958 of a Missions Abroad Committee to foster international activities. This committee used contacts with American Reorganization members serving overseas with the military, other government agencies, or businesses to build small enclaves of Saints. Virtually all of the foreign missions of the Reorganized Church were founded as a result of an individual member's contact with people of the area.⁴⁴

Table 4. Reorganized Non-English Missions Opened in 1960s

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Year Mission Opened</i>	<i>Membership After First Year</i>	<i>Membership in 1970</i>
Japan	1960	0	96
Okinawa	1960	0	46
Korea	1960	0	254
Mexico	1964	244	340
Peru	1965	41	62
Brazil	1965	27	42
Nigeria	1966	5	762
India	1966	186	607
Philippines	1966	44	198
Haiti	1968	154	221
New Caledonia	1968	46	87
Fiji	1968	7	7
Total			2,720

(Source: *Statistics Department and Data Records reports in World Conference Reports and Minutes published for conferences, RLDS Library-Archives.*)

Without question, the Reorganization's structure and belief system was altered as a result of its contact with non-Western civilizations but probably not to the extent that many have asserted. What changes that came about were mostly incremental and generally of a minor nature, such as the adoption of symbols and slogans aimed at recognizing the world role of the institution. For illustration, in 1960 the church officially

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

adopted the term “world” in place of “general” for identifying its conferences, headquarters, etc., because it “is more meaningful and descriptive in our world-wide evangel than the term ‘General’ . . .”⁴⁵ Some influences were more substantial to be sure, but genuinely significant non-western influences are difficult to uncover. The most obvious case in this category was the change the church had to make in 1966 when the first baptisms of polygamists in India took place. From its inception the Reorganized Church had staunchly opposed plural marriage. When Reorganization missionaries began baptizing polygamists in India they raised a paradox to this time-honored resistance and created a huge controversy.⁴⁶ The hotly debated official position on this issue hammered out in the late 1960s allowed polygamists membership in the church, provided they took no additional wives after baptism.⁴⁷

This issue was only formally resolved through a 1972 pronouncement of “divine will” by W. Wallace Smith, which said in part:

Monogamy is the basic principle on which Christian married life is built. Yet, as I have said before, there are also those who are not of this fold to whom the saving grace of the gospel must go. When this is done the church must be willing to bear the burden of their sin, nurturing them in the faith, accepting that degree of repentance which it is possible for them to achieve, looking forward to the day when through patience and love they can be free as a people from the sins of years of their ignorance (D&C 150:10).

Even with this declaration many Reorganized Church members hesitated accepting polygamists into the movement. More than a hundred years of religious belief mitigated against it and probably the matter died down after a while only because the polygamists were halfway around the world. If they had been living in Independence, Missouri, and remained an active part of the church the issue might not yet be settled.⁴⁸ Clearly the missionary effort beyond the west forced change upon the church.

45. *Rules and Resolutions*, WCR 1021.

46. On the Reorganization’s traditional approach to polygamy, see Richard P. Howard, “The Changing RLDS Response to Mormon Polygamy: A Preliminary Analysis,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3 (1983): 14-28; Alma R. Blair, “RLDS Views of Polygamy: Some Historiographical Notes,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 5 (1985): 16-28.

47. See Maurice L. Draper, “Polygamy Among Converts in East Asia,” *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 1 (Dec. 1970): 85-88, which contains a positive statement of the Reorganization’s approach to the issue by a member of the First Presidency; Verne Deskin, “You Are Involved in Polygamy,” *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 1 (Dec. 1970): 89-92, a critique from a conservative church member; and Editorial Board, “The Polygamy Debate in the Church Today,” *Courage: A Journal of History, Thought, and Action* 1 (Dec. 1970): 107-109; Draper, *Isles and Continents*, 136, 191-95, 258.

48. This was one of the many volatile issues that came up at the Reorganization’s 1970 World Conference. Russell, “Reorganized Mormon Church Beset by Controversy,” 769-71.

Even so, the nature and extent of the change attributed to non-western contact far outweighed what can be justified by the evidence. First, it was not a foregone conclusion that the Reorganization would be fundamentally altered because it moved into foreign missions. Other churches have made that same move before and their bedrock religious distinctives have remained 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" argument 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 alternative positions. Indeed, many of the people joining the church in such places as Latin America and Africa during the decade were former Latter-day Saints who had become disenchanted with Mormonism; it was 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 in 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 provided added impetus and a rationale for the changes already at work.⁴⁹

THE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPERATIVE

All other factors affecting the Reorganized Church in the 1960s led logically to the expansion of the organizational structure of the church. The increasing budgetary base of the era made possible the expansion of missionary and other service efforts, but the structure to oversee this effort also had to be devised. This involved the creation of new offices, the development of new procedures and materials, and the management of the overall activities of the organization. It also brought a proliferation of

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

career church officials and a resultant bureaucracy with all the attendant pluses and minuses of this approach. This process can be traced in any developing organization, as it moves from a simple “vest-pocket” operation run by a handful of people who have an intimate knowledge and wide latitude to accomplish goals to a large organization with rules and procedures. It is essentially the process of bureaucratization and the Reorganization experienced it *par excellence* in the 1960s.

The increasing complexity of the organizational structure of the movement during the era bespeaks the rapid development of the institution. For example, moving from a relatively small and simple organization at the beginning of the decade by 1969 the church had established eight commissions reporting to the Quorum of Twelve—Ministerial Personnel, Cultural Crisis, Research in Evangelism, Communications, Congregational Life, Zioniac Community Development, Education, and Field Organization—many of them with several departments beneath them. All were located at the church headquarters and staffed with personnel working on a variety of projects. The Presiding Bishopric also had six financial management offices, some also with subdivisions: Building Management, Accounting, Administration, Legal, Central Development Association, and Farm Management. Outside the headquarters were field jurisdictions divided into missions abroad, stakes, metropolises, regions, and districts, each with several congregations. Many of the larger jurisdictions had full-time appointees serving in them as administrative officers or missionaries.⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, during the decade the amount of funds dedicated to administration and overhead for church functions grew. In 1960 34 percent of the church’s budget was directed toward administration, education, and other overhead expenses. The rest went to missionary work. A decade later 41 percent went to overhead.⁵¹

In addition, there were significant efforts on the part of the First Presidency to reorient the church in new directions from an administrative perspective. In 1966 it sponsored the preparation of a study which eventually was issued as the *Objectives of the Church*. It was a six-point statement of long-range objectives involving clarification of theology, evangelism, stewardship, the zioniac quest, pastoral care, and, most important for this discussion, administrative decentralization.⁵² The First

50. Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, “Study of Organization and Management Practices,” Oct. 1969, unpublished study located in Reorganized Church Library-Archives; Garland E. Tickemyer, “The Regional Administrator,” 25 Nov. 1963, unpublished paper located in Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

51. Statistics Department and Data Records reports in World Conference Reports and Minutes published for conferences. These are available at the Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

52. *Objectives of the Church* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1966).

Presidency commented to the leadership of the church that those objectives had been adopted because it had "become evident that in many ways the church had become ingrown, and the spirit of the evangel had weakened. Growing out of these tendencies, there were definite indications that the church was not really addressing itself to the needs of the world." The presidency added that "it appeared that our thrust had become quite defensive in view of the problems arising out of the martyrdom of 1844, and the subsequent fragmentation of the church."⁵³ While one must be careful not to see this as the sum total of the road map for the future, in retrospect many of the theological and organizational issues that later emerged were raised in it.

Although the issue of administrative decentralization was later dropped as a long-term objective, presumably because it was truly a procedural rather than a basic part of the church's mission, it had serious repercussions in the church of the 1960s. At its core was a desire, especially resulting from expansion into new foreign regions and the sometimes far-reaching cultural differences that were involved, to allow local and regional leaders a wide range of freedom to make program and execution decisions. This approach supposedly allowed administrative officers close to the situation to respond more effectively to current issues.⁵⁴

Along with this decision went the formulation of a single-line authority structure for the church, which established the First Presidency as the counterpart to the president and CEO of a corporation, with the Quorum of Twelve acting as the head of the sales force, and the Presiding Bishopric serving as corporate treasurer.⁵⁵ This reorganization was validated by a study of church organization and management completed under contract for the church by the Booz, Allen, and Hamilton Corporation. President W. Wallace Smith recalled in 1981 that the study accomplished its goal by helping "to streamline administrative responsibilities in the church."⁵⁶

53. First Presidency to Elders of the Church, Jan. 1968, Walter N. Johnson Papers, P67, f19.

54. Maurice L. Draper, "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Before and After 1960," unpublished address delivered at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa. This approach toward management was codified in a 1970 World Conference Resolution. See *Rules and Resolutions*, WCR 1097. See also Phillip M. Caswell, "The Methods and Benefits of Decentralization," 4 Nov. 1966, unpublished paper written for a class in Church Administration offered by the School of the Restoration, copy available in Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

55. Clifford A. Cole, "An Oral History Memoir," 1985, 179, unpublished manuscript, Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

56. W. Wallace Smith, "An Oral History Memoir," 1981, 196, unpublished manuscript in the Reorganized Church Library-Archives. The report, Booz, Allen, and Hamilton, "Study of Organization and Management Practices," is available in the Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

This decentralization effort led to a serious battle in the church hierarchy during the era, one in which the repercussions are still being felt. One central issue revolved around the responsibilities of the Presiding Bishopric to manage the financial affairs of the church. The Reorganization had nearly been forced to declare bankruptcy during the Great Depression of the 1930s and in that crisis had given virtually unrestricted power to the bishopric to manage resources as it deemed appropriate. Over the years this power of the purse also allowed the Presiding Bishopric to control the program of the church, a usurpation of authority chafed under by the First Presidency and the Twelve. This began to be especially ticklish when the church moved into foreign missions in the early 1960s. The president of the Quorum of Twelve recalled that "There was some little strain between the members of the Council of Twelve and Bishopric at that time because the Presiding Bishopric was still trying to find ways in which they could even remotely . . . hold title to property."⁵⁷ The bishopric held a virtual veto power over the expenditure of funds for missionary activity, although the Twelve were charged with conducting the missionary program. Wallace Smith recalled that on some occasions when the bishopric did not agree with a specific program activity, it would tell its financial officers in the field: "Well, don't pay any attention to the Stake President; he's just an administrator, and you can work independently in regard to the finances."⁵⁸ Several apostles, especially Cole, Neff, and William E. Timms, all of whom were heavily involved in foreign missions, pushed throughout the early 1960s for the assignment of specific sums to various missionary fields—a decision which the Presiding Bishopric would be consulted in—and then to allow the apostle in charge of the field to disburse it as needed. These men were joined in this effort by Maurice L. Draper and Duane E. Couey of the First Presidency.⁵⁹

Throughout the latter 1960s this controversy was played out inside the church's bureaucracy. While the details of the political process are almost impossible to ascertain presently because critical sources are restricted, the Joint Council meetings of the 1960s were lively as these issues were discussed. Harold W. Cackler, a member of the Presiding Bishopric at the time, recalled that his order underwent a systematic assault by the Twelve and Presidency, indicating that the other quorums would decide issues in advance and at the Joint Council meetings "the vote would be twelve to three on issues left to the Twelve and Bishopric." He also believed that consistent efforts were made to lessen the importance of the Bishopric through the appointment process of men who were

57. Cole, "Oral History Memoir," 165.

58. Smith, "Oral History Memoir," 175.

59. Interview with L. D. Harsin, 15 Jan. 1991, Independence, Missouri; E. Boyce Rogers, "Sections 149 and 149A: Conflict and Compromise," unpublished paper in my possession.

more in sympathy with the other quorums or were of less ability in the political process.⁶⁰

This administrative issue, truly a part of the decentralization effort as well as a more common bureaucratic turf battle, came out publicly in the World Conference of 1968 when the bishopric rebelled over a document presented as divine will and refused to accept it in its present form. Although the revelation had many nuances, its most controversial section involved the designation of the office of bishop as a "necessary appendage" to the high priesthood and that holders of that office were to administer temporalities in support of the spiritual leadership of the church for the accomplishment of its mission. Clearly implied was an assumption that the bishopric was not to define program and policy but to finance it after defined by the presidency and the Twelve.⁶¹ The opposition was vocal and adamant. The quorum of bishops refused to accept the document as inspired will because, among other critical concerns, it "relegates the office of bishop to that of a financial secretary."⁶² In an unprecedented move W. Wallace Smith presented a clarifying revelation on the section which mitigated partially the earlier statement. This was accepted as God's will and both documents were included in the Doctrine and Covenants as sections 149 and 149A. It clarified the issue somewhat, but the problem was not finally resolved until the 1970s (some would say that it is still unresolved) when new personnel in the quorums agreed to bury the hatchet.

In the process of this administrative and organizational transformation the Reorganized Church established a reasonably well-defined bureaucracy. A transformation of headquarters and field structure in the church made the institution somewhat more efficient, although there have been valid criticisms of these efforts as a layering process removing senior leadership from the rank and file membership. Presiding Patriarch Roy A. Cheville pointed up this concern in 1969 in a letter on communication in the church to the Quorum of Twelve Apostles' secretary, Reed M. Holmes:

Many [Saints] feel the "big boys" are quite apart and only come in for large gatherings. Some feel that some of us are now involved in committees and commissions that will hold us in Independence except for occasional sallies into the field. The needed and wanted contacts are calling for more than hand-shaking, for more than attending a reunion or an institute or a dedication meeting. Our people are needing to converse and communicate. They

60. Harold W. Cackler, quoted in Rogers, "Sections 149 and 149A."

61. Doctrine and Covenants 149; World Conference Transcript, 1968, 106, Reorganized Church Library-Archives.

62. World Conference Transcript, 1968, 107.

need to feel that they may inquire freely and state their concerns and be heard.⁶³

He urged a conscious effort to return to some of the informality of an earlier era when the system was not so complex and access was directly available to all. This was not a successful effort, and it became increasingly clear as the 1960s progressed that the Reorganized Church was becoming a modern, far-flung, complex institution.⁶⁴

FROM SECT TO DENOMINATION

All of these factors accelerated a dynamic that had been present in the Reorganized Church for many years, the shift from a sect to a denomination. Although definitions of "sects" and "denominations" are debatable, most agree that sects represent relatively small religious groups sharing beliefs and practices in relative contradiction to the majority of society. The principle ingredient in the definition of a sect is not size, but rather its tension with the prevailing culture. It tends to attract people who, for one reason or another, do not feel part of the larger society. But it can be a richly rewarding experience for its members as they find a fullness in worship and social interaction with people of like perspectives. Denominations, on the other hand, have largely made peace with society and share its overarching values. While most religious entities have begun as sects, they cannot remain so forever. Indeed,

over time, the privileged faction will tend to get its way. It will use its control of the religious organization to reduce tension with the surrounding society, for such tension will tend to hamper the privileged. That is, to the degree that the religious group is in tension with the external society, it will limit powerful members' ability to realize their full potential for success in secular life and it will reduce the supply and value of the direct rewards the religious group supplies to its members.⁶⁵

In the Reorganized Church of the 1960s evidence of reduced tension and increased accommodation to society was not as dramatic, but it was present as never before. The First Presidency's support of ecumenical ef-

63. Roy A. Cheville to Reed M. Holmes, 14 June 1969, Walter N. Johnson Papers, P67, f22.

64. Some of this complexity can also be grasped in the makeup and organization of the church's World Conferences. See M. Richard Troeh, "Divisions of the House," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 19 (Fall 1986): 59-83; M. Richard Troeh and Marjorie Troeh, *The Conferring Church* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1987).

65. Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), 104, 872.

forts was only one of many theological indicators of social accommodation. The issues wrestled with, the positions developed, the increase in economic and corresponding social status for the church membership all fostered a move in the direction of greater incorporation into society. To a very real extent, during the 1960s the Reorganized Church made a shift from religious sect to denomination.⁶⁶

The move from sect to denomination has not been an easy or especially pretty process. Early on it created a rift in the church that has only widened in the years since that time. The first serious challenge to the shift from sect to denomination came at the 1970 World Conference when those members unwilling to consider a broader vision for the work of the organization attempted to circumscribe the effort. Operating through the church's political process they mounted a campaign to defeat what they believed was creeping ecumenism in the movement in the name of the traditional conceptions that they believed had been restored to Earth through Joseph Smith, Jr. From their perspective, the restored "truth" could not be changed. On every score the conservatives lost that contest. As reported in the *Christian Century*:

In the '60s the RLDS Church seemed to move slightly closer to mainstream Protestantism. Greater contact with Protestant scholarship has led to a de-emphasis in some Mormon teachings and greater stress on central Christian themes. At the 1970 conference in Independence those who favor the trend won an important test—for the Old Jerusalem Gospel faction tried hard to reverse that trend and failed.⁶⁷

While transitioning from sect to denomination was a logical and probably a necessary step for the Reorganization, signaling as it did a move into a more mature state for the church, it also bespoke the ambivalence of modern society and the casting away of traditional spiritual uniqueness. The movement from sect to denomination, accordingly, also brought with it a corresponding loss of traditional identity.⁶⁸ Although present to some degree before, because of the alterations and shift from sect to denomination in the 1960s there was a loss of that trajectory that

66. Booth, "Recent Shifts in Restoration Thought"; Maurice L. Draper, "Sect-Denomination-Church Transition and Leadership in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," M.A. Thesis, Kansas University, 1964; Douglas D. Alder and Paul M. Edwards, "Common Beginnings, Divergent Beliefs," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11 (Spring 1978): 18-29.

67. Russell, "Reorganized Mormon Church Beset by Controversy," 771.

68. 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 Launius and Spillman, *Let Contention Cease*.

linked present with past and propelled the church into the future. At the risk of oversimplifying, the Reorganization has never been just right thinking and doing; it has been most importantly *feeling* that God was with it just as God was with the prophets and apostles of old. To be a Reorganization member was not just to accept a set of books, a priesthood system, a leadership structure, a theology, though those have always been important symbols for the Saints. To be a Reorganization member has meant *feeling* in one's bosom the spirit of God's power. It has been deeply experiential. The members have personally asked of God and prayed for greater light and wisdom, have heard inspired preaching of miracles and God's promises to his faithful, have sung with heartfelt thanks "I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former years," have felt the warmth of the Holy Spirit as elders anointed and laid on hands for healing, have hoped that the love and peace felt during administration would someday pervade the entire world community as the kingdoms of this world were transformed into the kingdom of God. To be a Reorganization member has been most of all to *feel* deep within that one has been 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.⁶⁹

The deep sense of spiritual vitality that has enjoyed such a strong tradition in the Reorganized Church winnowed away during the transition from sect to denomination in the 1960s. While the generation of Reorganization members who brought forth these changes did so for good and just and Christian reasons, it has been unable to replace the Reorganization identity of the pre-1960s period with any other that can be agreed upon by the membership. Looking at the experience from twenty or more years later, the coming of age of the movement meant that the church both gained and lost at the same time. It was an episode very much like the larger transformations of society during the same period. During the 1960s in the United States a younger generation of people filled with high expectations set out to remake the world. They were partly successful, but somewhere in the process lost their innocence and their vision of the future and their efforts degenerated. Instead of remaking the world most ended up accommodating to it and trying to beat it by its own rules.

CONCLUSION

The movement of the church into foreign missions, its rise in income and economic position, the development of an organized bureaucracy, the increasing ecumenism, the concern with social issues beyond the

69. Larry W. Conrad to Roger D. Launius, 15 Jan. 1990.

church as never before, and a series of other changes arising during the decade all suggest a coming of age for the Reorganized Church. It progressed from a sect to a denomination with a vision broader than itself and it has rarely looked back. Whether the age drove the changes, prompting the church to react, or whether the church took the initiative and could have chosen to ignore what was taking place around it is a moot point. The Reorganization's traditional openness to Protestant religious influences probably aided in its willingness to move toward greater ecumenism. Several years ago Clare D. Vlahos described what could only be considered a tightrope upon which the Reorganized Church had tread since the 1850s as it both sought "to be reasonable to gentiles and legitimate to Mormons."⁷⁰ In the 1960s the church began to abandon its traditional goal of "legitimacy" to Mormons in favor of a greater reasonableness to other elements of Christianity. That step was probably not conscious and undoubtedly those who began the process did not anticipate that it would extend as far, too far according to some, as it has. The turbulent era of the 1960s set the stage for the continuation of the shift from sect to denomination that has been so much a part of the Reorganization in subsequent years. For good or ill, the course marked in the 1960s has been followed into the 1990s. It was a critical decade in the maturation of the movement, a tumultuous, confrontational, bewildering, and also exalting time in which the Reorganized Church fundamentally altered its structure and pattern of behavior.

70. Clare D. Vlahos, "Images of Orthodoxy: Self-Identity in Early Reorganization Apologetics," in Maurice L. Draper and Clare D. Vlahos, eds., *Restoration Studies I* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 176-86, quote on 176.