

REFLECTIONS ON THE MINISTRY OF PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

It is not difficult to identify the large difference that President McKay has made in the character and historical movement of the Church. I refer to the obvious fact that especially during the period of his presidency the Church has broken some of its parochial bonds and hopefully has begun to move toward universality. At least there are evidences that this is the case, and I doubt that anything as important as this has happened to the Church in the past century.

To conserve and strengthen its community character and at the same time overcome the limits which the community ideal inevitably imposes upon it is the most difficult task which confronts the Church. Here, it seems to me, is where President McKay exhibited his special strength as a leader.

The recent stirring of the Church toward universalism is represented not so much by its missionary expansion as by its building "foreign" temples, not by any change in doctrine, but by a change in disposition. The Church has always had quite extensive missions, but with the exception of the Polyne-sians served by the Hawaiian Temple, the converts came to America to become full-fledged Mormons. The doctrines taught and believed in foreign climes have been the same as those taught and believed in Utah, but a part of one's conversion to the gospel, if he were a native of Europe, South America, or the Orient, was to learn to sing the songs of Zion, to join the "gathering" to Israel, and all too often to abandon precious values in his native culture to become a "Utah" Mormon. In our romantic and sentimental moments we are sometimes inordinately attached to the ways and attitudes of the past which identify our faith with Western American geography and social behavior. But I hope that a new era has begun in Mormonism, an era of higher and broader horizons, of a finer sense of the universal quality that properly belongs to religion.

A variety of social, political, and economic as well as religious forces are active in breaking through the parochial character of Mormonism. During the years of President McKay's administration the Church was affected by the large social forces which followed upon the Second War: the remarkable increase in world trade, travel, and communications, the advances of technology, increasing industrialization, and the movement toward world unity symbolized by the United Nations or expressed in the ecumenical trends within Christianity. I am afraid that much of the ecumenical spirit has passed us Mormons by, mainly because of our preoccupation with ourselves and the condition of our own faith. But that in this period the Church began to enlarge its perspectives on its place in the world, magnifying its vision, and moving, though slowly, toward an identification of itself with all men, was surely due in large part to President McKay's own moral disposition and ideals, ideals which were inclusive rather than exclusive, which included rather than excluded his fellowmen. That from an early date he possessed a quality of world-mindedness not commonly found in the Church is known