

# Reviews

*Edited by Edward Geary*

## THE RESTORATION CHURCHES: TWO REVIEWS

*The Mormon Churches, A Comparison from Within.* By Francis W. Holm, Sr. Kansas City, Missouri: Midwest Press, 1970. 238 pp. \$4.95.

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## THE POSSIBILITY OF RECONCILIATION

*Paul A. Wellington*

This book has developed out of the author's lifetime experiences in association with the two major Restoration Churches. Although he has spent most of his adult life as a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he spent the first twenty years in the environs of Mormonism and continued early friendships and made new ones over the years. Therefore, he expresses himself as conversant with the current thought and practice of both groups.

The author organizes his manuscript into twenty-nine chapters, with each generally concentrating on a single subject. In each chapter he attempts to present the two churches' viewpoints, then he usually gives his personal evaluation of the two stands. The first one-third of the book and occasional chapters at the end deal with the "mechanical functions" of the two churches — organizational setup and policy. The rest of the book evaluates doctrinal stands of the two churches.

It soon becomes obvious (and the author finally says it in his "conclusions" chapter) that the author admires the organizational abilities of the Mormons. He gives them credit for following the lead of Joseph Smith, Jr., in this area. In contrast he expresses the opinion that the Reorganized Church

has adhered more closely to the doctrines of the early church, that it has strayed less from basic principles of belief.

In procedures, however, he makes it clear that he feels each has too often allowed traditions to develop which have led to a degree of apostasy. For instance, in his chapter discussing prophetic succession, he charges the Mormons with abandoning revelatory experience and turning to "rights of seniority." The Reorganized Church, on the other hand, has "circumscribed God to the choice of a descendant of Joseph Smith."

It appears that the author, because of his personal experiences, feels the Reorganization has gone too far in the use of "democratic processes." It is his opinion that the theocratic rights of leadership have been abandoned in too many instances, allowing too much diversity in belief and practice to grow within the organization. He also suggests that the Reorganization has accepted too many of the practices of Protestantism. He decries the use of full-time "paid" ministers, feeling that this practice leads to dependence on them in local situations. He prefers the "divine call" found in the Reorganization to the almost automatic ordination at a certain age found in the Mormon Church, but he favors the Mormon selection process for the major quorums — one based on choosing according to experience and success in past performance, especially in the secular administrative field.

It is in the fundamentals of belief that the author disagrees with the Mormon Church. He speaks against the plural marriage doctrine, baptism for the dead, secret temple rites (which he feels were greatly influenced by Masonic involvement in Nauvoo), the eternal progression theory, Negro discrimination in priesthood and salvation, and dependence on the "living oracles." He approves of the Mormon interpretation on tithing and likes their welfare programs and their general administrative approach to priesthood, as well as their women's and youth organizations for service and fellowship.

In concluding his book, he calls for positive steps to foster better understanding between the organizations. He notes that past animosities between leaders have greatly subsided, and suggests that members of both groups get to know each other in order that the "work of the Lord" can be more fully accomplished.

It appears that this is the first attempt in recent years to suggest a reconciliation between the two churches. It comes, however, from one who is not in an official position to do much about it. Perhaps this is the only way such a movement can get its start. Reactions to the book among members of both churches may further encourage the reconciliation process.

## A SURVIVING DYNAMIC

*T. Edgar Lyon*

This is a unique composition in the true sense of the word — there is not another with which it can be compared. Francis W. Holm, Sr., was reared in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City (hereafter