

SHIFTS IN RESTORATION THOUGHT

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And this is the gospel which God has commanded us to preach to all people, once more, for the last time. And no other system of religion which is now organized among men is of any use; everything different from this, is a perverted gospel bringing a curse upon them that preach it, and upon them that hear it.¹

—Parley P. Pratt (1838)

An unfortunate and erroneous concept about the nature of authority is that only one organized church institution at a time may have authority to represent God. It is the testimony of the Reorganized Church of J. C. of LDS that we have been called of God to accomplish the divine purpose in God's world. When we make this assertion it does not necessarily follow that no other person or institution has spiritual authority. . . . Our faith in the majesty and power of that revelation [speaking of God in Christ] would be diminished immeasurably if we perceived the ongoing authoritative ministry of Jesus Christ as being confined to our day and sect.²

—First Presidency of RLDS Church (1979)

BOTH OF THE ABOVE STATEMENTS are clearly affirmations of faith, strong declarations of belief in the Restoration movement, each evolving out of presuppositions about the fundamental truth of the message delivered. Each statement, though the former probably more so than the latter, is representative; that is, numbers of Saints have shared the stated convictions. In both cases, the intention appears to be the same, to identify the church of the latter days in relation to other church organizations of its time.

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The basic nature of that identity, however, radically changes from one statement to the other. The former quotation, from the popular Mormon missionary resource, *A Voice of Warning*, penned by Apostle Parley P. Pratt in 1838, registers for the Restoration movement a claim of distinction from all other "systems of religion." In the latter quotation such a claim has been abandoned. The authority to represent God is shared. We are told that the "authoritative ministry of Jesus Christ" cannot be confined to the efforts of "one organized church institution." The exponents of this position are members of the RLDS First Presidency speaking in Independence last January at their meetings with appointees and executive ministers for the purpose of considering the major anticipated thrusts of the Reorganized Latter Day Saint church in the next decade.

Though claiming no attempt to be systematic or thorough, I intend to examine this and other significant shifts in Restoration thought. What I have to say cannot, I suppose, be considered, strictly speaking, historical or theological. It reflects more my personal observations and impressions which have been informed by an analysis of selected literature. For this purpose I reviewed the *Lectures on Faith*, originally called "lectures on theology," delivered to the School of Elders in the Kirtland Temple in December of 1834,³ Pratt's *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People*, and varied versions of the "Epitome of Faith," sometimes designated the "Articles of Faith,"⁴ written later. My examination of the recent literature included the statements of the RLDS Basic Beliefs Committee in the 1970 publication *Exploring the Faith*,⁵ *World Conference Bulletins*, from 1960 to the present, with special attention to the reports of the RLDS First Presidency and the Twelve, and four theological addresses delivered by the First Presidency at their meetings last January with appointees and executive ministers.

I confess that my remarks are not the product of research begun with neutralized motivations. I have *looked* for the shifts in thought, sometimes rereading for the sake of finding. For example, in searching for an indication of changes in perspective I turned to the Reports of the First Presidency and Twelve rather than to the sermons by the Prophet and President of the church because the former, in general, reflected more consistently an attempt to deal with the issues of change and growth in the church.

One further caveat needs to be made. Actually "Restoration thought" does not shift. As Sidney Mead has commented, "Institutions don't believe and affirm; persons in institutions do." We cannot talk about Restoration thought, therefore, in the abstract. The statements of the Basic Beliefs Committee, for instance, are not to be construed as beliefs of the church. They represent, to some degree, the beliefs of many Saints in particular; but the statements, in fact, are the product of individual members of a specific committee enjoined to prepare, through dialogue and compromise, affirmations that can be tolerated, if not appreciated, by a majority of the Saints.

It is possible to summarize some of the early claims of Latter Day Saintism. First, the second coming of Christ was imminent and his church was being

restored to participate in the preparation for this event. In October 1834, Oliver Cowdery, editor of the *Messenger and Advocate*, attempted to characterize some of the fundamental affirmations to which the paper would be committed:

We believe that God has revealed himself to men in this age, and commenced to raise up a church preparatory to his second advent, when he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.⁶

Probably very few Latter-day Saints disagreed with Judge Higbee and Parley P. Pratt, who in a doctrinal address delivered in 1840, declared: "As to the signs of the times, we believe that the gathering of Israel and the second advent of Messiah, with all the great events connected therewith, are near at hand."⁷ It is interesting that in the version of the "Epitome of Faith" appearing in the "Wentworth Letter" published in the *Times and Seasons*, March 1842, Joseph Smith also affirms the "literal gathering of Israel" and that "Christ will reign personally upon the earth," but the notion that this will happen soon has been dropped.⁸

Second, there is a strict demarcation drawn between the church restored and all other Christian bodies, the former being understood to contain the "fulness of the gospel," a complete restoration of the doctrine, organization and authority of the New Testament Church. In the Restoration movement's first "epitome of faith," again, Oliver Cowdery writes:

We believe that the popular religious theories of the day are incorrect. That they are without parallel in the revelations of God, as sanctioned by him; and that however faithfully they may be adhered to, or however zealously and warmly they may be defended, they will never stand the strict scrutiny of the word of life.⁹

And Sidney Rigdon, writing in 1836, asserts:

The Latter Day Saints believe that Christ will prepare the way of his coming by raising up and inspiring apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, and under their ministry restore again to his saints all the gifts of the church as in the days of old.¹⁰

It was understood that this had been accomplished, of course, by the founding of Christ's church in 1830. Arguing for a revealed unity in the New Testament, "one Church, or assembly of worshippers united in their doctrine and built upon the *truth*," and assured that God could not author "discordant systems," Higbee and Pratt proclaim:

. . . we have no confidence in the sects, parties, systems, doctrines, creeds, commandments, traditions, precepts, and teachings of modern times, so far as they are at variance with each other, and contrary to the Scriptures of Truth. . . . We have, therefore, withdrawn from all these

systems of error and delusion, and have endeavored to restore the ancient doctrine and faith which was once delivered to the saints.¹¹

They were not calling into question the sincerity of persons in other denominations; it was just that their beliefs were wrong.

Finally, the Latter-day Saints linked a restoration of the old Jerusalem with a new Jerusalem to be built by them, alone, in America. Joseph wrote, "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes [and] that Zion will be built upon this continent."¹² The Restoration movement assumed exclusive responsibility for establishing the kingdom of God on earth, for literally building the city of Zion in America. This task was of utmost importance since Christ's second coming was thought to be ushered in by its completion. As Pratt's "Voice" warned,

when this city is built the Lord will appear in his glory and not before. So from this we affirm, that if such a city is never built, then the Lord will never come.¹³

Themes of latter-day restoration and distinctives have not been lost to the Reorganization. Barbara Higdon notes that until recently the church had continued to define itself in apologetic, or defensive terms. It upheld its organizational structures and beliefs as parallel to those of the New Testament Church and now uniquely restored. She comments, "Although continuous modifications in language took place, these ideas defined the reorganization in the first half of the Twentieth Century."¹⁴

William Russell, examining in 1967 the current missionary message of the RLDS church, had drawn similar conclusions. Reviewing tracts produced by the RLDS publishing house and approved by church officials, he observed the following content being espoused: To be distinguished from other Christian denominations, the RLDS church is the "true church"; the New Testament Church, its doctrine, organization, and practices, has been restored through the RLDS body; and the Christian church had fallen so clearly and fully into apostasy that its authority was removed, setting the stage for the preparatory works of the Reformers and finally the full restoration of that authority in the Latter Day Saint movement. Russell criticizes the scriptural, historical and theological distortions present in such notions, and concludes with a succinct indictment: "The basic mis-direction of the RLDS missionary message lies in the fact that it is centered in the RLDS church itself rather than in the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹⁵

Still there have always been voices in the Restoration crying out for shifts in the wilderness. Two of those voices were heard early on. Of no little significance was Joseph Smith III's alteration of the means to establish Zion. Church Historian, Richard Howard, writes: "Joseph Smith III delivered instructions to the Church which turned its Zion concepts inside out."¹⁶ The first prophet of the Reorganization discouraged a literal gathering to one

central place, urging, instead, the Saints to contribute as the church to the cause of Zion in terms of community needs wherever they were. Peter Judd and Bruce Lindgren agree with Howard. They observe: "This approach has shaped the church's conception of its Zionite commission. It advocated the building of 'community within community' rather than community withdrawn from society, as had been most often projected by the early Latter Day Saints."¹⁷

In an important paper on dissent in the Reorganization,¹⁸ Alma Blair concentrates on the influential voice of Jason Briggs, who for ideological reasons eventually left the church. Briggs, whose role was central to the founding of the Reorganization and who served as President of the Twelve most of the time between 1853 and 1885, nevertheless, failed to fit the traditional thought mold of Latter Day Saintism. Briggs considered nothing connected with the church sacrosanct. To him inspiration, scriptures and prophets were all quite fallible. The search for truth involved primarily the best possible use of our reason and experience. No conclusions could ever be considered infallible or final.¹⁹ The tentativeness of faith was an imperative. In a series of articles in *The Messenger*, Briggs spoke up on gathering to Zion. Not only did he think a literal gathering to a specific area was "unscriptural;" it was "dangerous" as well. Such attempts to establish Zion had never worked before, and he saw no reasons for being optimistic about the possibilities in the Reorganization. The principle of gathering, that is, the building of community, Briggs could accept, but when such a principle extended itself beyond the notion of "spiritual Zion to the idea of a place in Jackson County, he judged the cause almost certainly doomed."²⁰

Briggs' controversial views on inspiration and the scriptures further represent a shift in Restoration assumptions. Not only did persons not have to be RLDS to have prophetic insight, Briggs believed, they didn't even have to be Christian. Contrary to the popular notion of "propositional revelation," Briggs asserted: "Inspiration is a development, dependent upon the faculties of the mind, and corresponds with the experience, and does not transcend it, though it may seem to."²¹

He believed the Bible, as any scripture, was "full of error," and he denied the validity of a literal interpretation of all its passages, treating the story of Adam and Eve, for example, as mythological. He criticized what he considered to be "weaknesses" in the Doctrine and Covenants, refusing to assume that it was inspired just because the prophet had uttered the words. Inspiration demanded internal verification.

Writing about the subjugation of Briggs' ideas, Blair states:

Briggs may have found solace in the 1886 Committee report suggesting there should be wide latitude allowed for individual members' opinions on most subjects. But that did not change the restrictions placed on public expressions made by ministers and officers who are always representing the church. The Board of Publications did not liberalize its

policies on what could or could not be printed and probably printed fewer 'controversial' articles than it had before While 'plenary inspiration' had never been authorized as explanation for the scriptures' veracity, the 'three standard books' were declared to be 'true and proper standards of evidence in the determination of all controversial doctrines in theology.' In the context of his long battle to establish the historical relativity and tentative character of the scriptures and inspiration this would seem to be a major defeat for Briggs.²²

Unhampered by the professional historian's concern for continuity, I am going to take the liberty now to turn the time machine ahead by a half century or so. In the last two decades, in particular, the Reorganized Latter Day Saints, some intentionally, and others, in order to keep abreast of the changes taking place, have struggled with theological issues having to do with some very fundamental questions of identity and role as a worldwide church. We have been asking what it means, and what it might demand from us, to represent Christ in other cultures and in particular historical settings. Judd and Lindgren observe:

Early Latter Day Saints felt the role of the prophetic church to be largely predictive, i.e., the church was to discern the evils of the times that pointed to the end of history, the destruction of the wicked, and Christ's Second Coming. But the theological reflections of the 1960's have brought to the Saints a somewhat different perception of the church's prophetic role. Increasingly the church sees its role as trying to understand what it is called to be and do in this particular moment of time.²³

In 1966 a "Statement on Objectives for the Church," approved only three days earlier by the Joint Council, was read to the World Conference delegates on April 17. Among the major goals for the next decade included the task of clarifying the theology of the church. To this end a Committee had been functioning for almost a decade under President F. Henry Edwards' Chairmanship. However, in 1966 Apostle Clifford Cole, president of the Council of Twelve and an original committee member, accepted this responsibility, and in 1970, *Exploring the Faith*, the product of the Basic Beliefs Committee's work was published. It was developed as an enlarged replacement for the Epitome of Faith originally written by Joseph Smith, Jr. The committee intended that it might more adequately represent the beliefs of the modern church. Recognizing the limitations of such a work, however, Cole states in the Preface: "We do not present this statement as a final work. Most of all, we do not want people to ever think of it as a creed. It is intended as a resource to assist interested persons in enriching their understanding of the meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."²⁴

Although President W. Wallace Smith in his sermon at the 1970 Conference describes these new statements of belief as "additional explanation" of

the Epitome of Faith, even a casual comparison reveals some significant shifts in thought, if only in terms of what affirmations of the Epitome of Faith are dropped or redefined in the more recent "Statements" of *Exploring the Faith*. The doctrine of the church, for example, undergoes a major shift. The sixth of Joseph's affirmations, "We believe in the same organization that existed in the primitive church, viz: apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists &c.," has been removed altogether. An earlier emphasis on identifying the church as a restoration of the organizational structure of the New Testament Church, thereby attempting to validate its unique authority, fades before the committee's description of the church as "the community of those who have covenanted with Christ" seeking to "surrender itself to him in worship and service."²⁵

Another example should illustrate even further this shift in thought. It represents what I call the process of *deliteralization*, a process which facilitates the wider role of symbols in religious movements. Joseph's affirmations of the "literal gathering of Israel," the "restoration of the Ten Tribes," and in conjunction with these events, the building of Zion on the American continent where "Christ will reign personally upon the earth," are muted in the Committee's statement on Zion. Here Zion is generalized to "the implementation of those principles, processes, and relationships which give concrete expression to the power of the kingdom of God in the world." The gathering has been redefined essentially as "signal communities" where a "covenant people" attempt to "live out the will of God in the total life of society."²⁶ The emphasis is on the nature of the outreach, rather than on the distinctiveness of an identifiable community withdrawn from the world in order to function as a model of righteousness.

As Carl Bangs, Professor of Historical Theology, at St. Paul's Theological Seminary, so astutely points out in his review in *Courage* (1971), Although there is no "process of demythologization" here, a "new spirit" is adrift:

There is a complete absence of bitter attack on the 'denominations,' [in fact] there are expressions of indebtedness and kinship to them . . . [and there is] a freedom to see that the God who works in the Bible and the LDS history works also in the history of the 'continuing Christian community.'²⁷

Some of the so called "distinctives" are not altogether ignored, but they have been rephrased. Bangs observes, "The protestant reader of non-RLDS persuasion will indeed find little to disturb him in the Statement itself."²⁸

Further evidence of shifts in Restoration thought can be found in the *World Conference Bulletins* of recent years. Here, particularly in the reports of the First Presidency and the Twelve, statements calculated to convert the Saints to a larger vision of the nature and mission of the church in the world. The *Bulletins* include not only the ideological shifts per se, but reveal very clearly, especially in the Conferences of 1968 and 1970, considerable dissent over the shifts perceived and the church's attempts to handle the problem.

The 1960 *World Conference Bulletin* contains merely a greeting by the First Presidency to the conference participants, previewing for them some of the scheduled activities of the week with the Council of Twelve presenting an unimaginative report of the geographical and statistical dimensions of their missionary work. But in the 1962 *Bulletin*, signals of future issues to be dealt with are evident. Reflecting on the commitment of the Saints making possible the completion of the Auditorium, the First Presidency beckon, "What has been done so well in the *Auditorium* is but the prelude to what must now be done, with careful planning but at increased tempo, as we face the broadening times of our growing world."²⁹

In an epistle from the Council of Twelve, the conference is exposed to the fundamental questions which will shape the Council's inquiry for years to come:

But what does it mean to express the gospel in the changing circumstances of modern life with its technical knowledge, industry, rapid communication and the mingling together of many people? What does it mean to express God's word in all cultures? What does it mean to apply the universals of the gospel to the specific and varied ethnic concepts of marriage, the family, and so on? These questions require answers.³⁰

In the Conference of 1964, two statements, in particular, reveal that the inquiry spoken of in 1962 had not been shoved aside. The First Presidency report: "We cannot function effectively as a world church with the same simple organization through which we planted the church in Iowa and Illinois and Missouri a century ago."³¹ Later they add, setting the stage for changes in expression, if not in thought:

It may well be that this basic faith [in the Lord Jesus Christ and his coming kingdom] will sometimes be expressed in terms peculiar to our age rather than in phrases which were once new but, which have long since lost their relevance.³²

The 1966 *World Conference* shows the increasing experience of the church with missions abroad and consequent principles emerging in the church's thought. The Report of the Council of Twelve states:

It is advisable to build churches and to establish procedures in light of the cultural patterns of those nations to which we go. To overlay Americanisms upon other nations which may have even more to offer in their own culture is to cloud the essentials of faith and worship and to forfeit the contributions of diverse peoples to the total life of the church.³³

An ecumenical trend is also openly expressed. In a joint statement of the Presidency and the Twelve, "The Beckoning of the Future," the conference is admonished: "It has always been our practice to join with other groups, both

religious and secular, in promoting movements which are compatible with our vision of the kingdom. This we should continue to do."³⁴

In 1968 the conference is advised of a series of Joint Council seminars held during the interim. Designed to "gain a better understanding of the world and the church's mission in it," these seminars were described as "highly significant." There was no little talk among the conference delegates that year about the use of "highly-trained" non-RLDS educators and theologians as major resources for the seminars. Among the conclusions summarized by the First Presidency for the conference, I will mention one which representatively signifies a growing understanding of the Restoration in context:

The witness of the prophet Joseph Smith is an illumination of God's revelation in Jesus Christ . . . It [the Restoration] is not at odds with Christendom as a whole. The real enemy in today's world is not other Christian Communities but the wickedness and strife, alienation and despair that run rampant in the world.³⁵

The events of the 1970 World Conference are perhaps best symbolized by the title of William Russell's report on the conference printed in *Christian Century*, "Reorganized Mormon Church Beset by Controversy."³⁶ A Report of the First Presidency on the Standing High Council Study of the Ethics of Dissent in the church indicates the circumstances which prodded the development of a policy statement. There had been growing evidence that a number of individuals upset by various developments occurring in the church were appealing directly to the Saints to condemn the trends of "liberalism." In the Report the First Presidency attempts to explain to the satisfaction of the saints the reasons for and significance of recent actions which, as they understood it, clarify and enrich the theology and mission of the church. The committee study had reported to the First Presidency:

It is time in which many, if not all of the major church denominations, are facing urgent reappraisal of their doctrines in an attempt to speak to a generation very greatly alienated from traditional moral and cultural values. If we cling too tenaciously to a static, institutionalized church structure we run a great risk of no longer having a church after one more generation.³⁷

President W. Wallace Smith, in his sermon to the conference, "1970 and Beyond," adds his plea for a more liberal vision of the church's call to speak to the times: He warns, "Too narrow an approach to the interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ will not meet the needs of the discriminating individual who sees himself as serving God through the avenue of ministering to the needs of humanity."³⁸

Reflecting on the significance of these shifts, and interpreting this for the American public, Russell concludes in his article in the *Christian Century*: "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.”³⁹

While the 1970 conference does seem to be something of a watershed event for the church, some of the themes and concerns so common to the previous decade are still being raised in the conference of 1972. Speaking to those who remain too “eager to defend institutionalism for its own sake,” the First Presidency state plainly:

Prophetic leadership must point men beyond the institution to the principles and qualities which deserve to be pursued . . . We recognize the validity of the institution when it thus serves the truth. But we must never allow the truth to be distorted so as to serve the institution. This is idolatry. Joseph Smith, Jr., saw this especially in the early years, and did not hesitate to adjust form in order to represent the truth more adequately. Joseph Smith, III saw this, and his revelations are punctuated with the word ‘expedient.’ Such term does not mean in this context a nonethical pragmatism, but willingness to search for the basic divine intent in settings of constantly changing circumstances.⁴⁰

And in a sermon clearly reflecting the spirit of new interpretations and applications, President Smith declares to the conference:

Whenever we are faced with the question regarding the purpose of the church, we are sometimes hard pressed to decide just what is our image of the end product. I think we could agree that the church’s goal is not to produce white-robed Saints but to nurture mature individuals who can take their places in society and make contributions not only to their family and church but to the welfare of the whole community.⁴¹

The highlight of the 1974 conference, in my opinion, is Apostle Clifford Cole’s sermon, *The Cause of Zion—Today and Tomorrow*,⁴² which speaks to the church’s statement of Objectives as modified through wide consultation with the saints in the field in 1973. Addressing the question of “distinctives,” Cole first acknowledges the historical rather than the revelational roots of our notions of bringing the kingdom of God into being, our concepts of Zion, and our understandings of apostasy and restoration. Next, echoing a growing awareness of recent conferences, he maintains:

Where once we were preoccupied with recapturing the past, now we are increasingly absorbed in restoring and revitalizing our relationship to God and his purpose. Without rejecting the past, we must now give increasing attention to our calling into the future.⁴²

And what is that calling, to finally build our “city on the hill,” and so once-and-for-all convince the world it is possible? Such is not Cole’s message. Amazingly, he openly confesses no hope in the lasting meaning of such an accomplishment, even if we could literally offer it;

We doubt that we have a plan, or an institution, or a social order to offer the world, and if we did have, it would be only a few years until that contribution would be outdated and unable to meet the needs of the time. If the Saints had successfully established a zionic community in Missouri in the 1830's, it is hard to imagine that community having very much of importance to offer to the world today *unless* it changed radically from the Zion the early Saints envisioned.⁴³

It would be wrong, I think, to criticize Cole's view as pessimistic or faithless. Rather he was calling the conference to a realistic appraisal of the church's reasons for existence and inviting the membership to attach flesh to the bones of its convictions in a world of critical human need.

The Conferences of 1976 and 1978 reveal still further attempts at refinement with respect to theology, and the concerns for implementing some of the new Restoration principles evolving into being.

My last examples of shifts in Restoration thought are found in papers presented in January 1979 in Independence by the First Presidency to assembled appointees and executive ministers. Apparently these papers were not intended for distribution beyond the confines of the meetings. Perhaps fearing they might thereby become the new "position papers," the Presidency decided to allow their distribution. They are to be interpreted, I believe, as working papers only, not definitive theological statements of belief. They do represent some of the most recent illustrations of the Latter Day Saint struggle to identify and understand more fully its mission in today's world. In *The Nature of the Church*,⁴⁴ two explicit calls are rendered to the participants. The first is an invitation to serve Christ in the world, not in the church: "The interpretation of life and its meaning is not revealed in words from a book nor in structured forms of church organization. Its meaning emerges in life lived out in response to the word that was 'made flesh and dwelt among us.'" The second is a summon to engagement, not withdrawal from the world: "The mission of the church is like that of Jesus to stand in the world rather than against the world."⁴⁵

Of perhaps the most significance, however, are the ways in which familiar Latter Day Saint phrases or concepts have been redefined. In the paper, "Identity of the Church," participants would have nodded knowingly to the claim made early in the address that "the church embodies the fulness of the gospel." They might not have found as familiar, however, the statement explaining its meaning:

The testimony of the Restoration is not that we have one, two, or three books of scriptures. It is rather that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, validating our deepest struggles and our highest joy as existence in Christ. This is what we mean by the fulness of the gospel.⁴⁶

In the same address, the terms "restoration" and "apostasy," and the question of authority in the church, so common to our heritage, also undergo

an alteration. They define the restoration as a "process which must permeate the human community from within," and they add, "when we are honest about our own personal and corporate history, we realize that the apostasy and the restoration were not events that happened one time in history but rather are processes continually at work among us."⁴⁷

The Presidency relate the issue of authority to the question of the Church's legitimacy. Unlike the all too familiar attempts to defend the church's authority on the basis of right doctrine and organization, however, the Presidency, avoiding the traditional interpretation, conclude:

The authority of the church is thus related to its corporate willingness to stand with courage in the context of experienced reality and interpret the meaning of that reality with spiritual insight and integrity . . . Authority in the church relates to the coherency of the relationship between the church and the cultural situation of which it is a part. If there is no relationship between the church and its allocated arena of ministry, the church's authority is diminished.⁴⁸

In retrospect it appears that the process of restoration is not unique to the Latter Day Saint movement. Rather it represents, among those who choose to believe, one among many visions of God's activity.

Latter Day Saintism has learned, it seems, what the noted scholar, Rudolf Bultmann, unearthed about the New Testament. Bultmann came to believe that to be a Christian does not require the acceptance of a pre-scientific world view. By the same token, it seems logical to maintain that to be a Latter Day Saint does not require an adherence to an early nineteenth century world view.

The philosopher of religion, Huston Smith, writes:

In times of transition an effective answer to the social problem must meet two conditions. It must preserve true continuity with the past, for only by tying in with what men have known and are accustomed to can it be widely accepted . . . [but he continues]. The answer must also take sufficient account of new factors that now render the old answers inapplicable.⁴⁹

Smith refers to Confucius as an example: "He appeals to the Classics as the sole basis for his proposal. And yet it wasn't the old answer. All the way through, Confucius was reinterpreting, modifying."⁵⁰ I have attempted to remind us of some of the Confucianists in Latter Day Saintism.

Like the second generation Christian disciples living further away from the presence of the historical Jesus, and for whom the realistic expectation of a literal second coming had faded, we too must learn to find our way in the latter days which will *not* shortly end. We dare not wait for Jesus' body to return; rather we must risk ourselves becoming more fully that body for the sake of the world that God so loves.

NOTES

¹Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints* (New York City: W. Sanford, 1838), pp. 140-141.

²"The Identity of the Church," a paper delivered by the First Presidency of the RLDS Church at a gathering of appointees and executive ministers (January 9, 1979), p. 12.

³*Lectures on Faith*, Independence: Herald House, 1942. For a helpful summary of the historical background on the series of lectures and consideration of the questions of removal from the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, authorship and delivery see Leland H. Gentry, "What of the Lectures on Faith?" *Brigham Young University Studies*, Vol. 19, Fall, 1978.

⁴See Wayne Ham, ed., *Publish Glad Tidings*, Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1970 and Wilford C. Wood, *Joseph Smith Begins His Work*, Wilford C. Wood, publisher, 1962.

⁵*Exploring the Faith*, Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1970.

⁶*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October, 1834), p. 2.

⁷*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (March, 1840), p. 69.

⁸*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (March 1, 1842), p. 710.

⁹*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October, 1834), p. 2.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (November, 1836), p. 403.

¹¹*Times and Seasons*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (March, 1840), p. 68.

¹²*Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (March 1, 1842), p. 710.

¹³Pratt, p. 177.

¹⁴Barbara Higdon, "The Reorganization in the Twentieth Century," *Dialogue*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (Spring 1972), p. 95.

¹⁵William Russell, "The Missionary Message of the RLDS Church," April 28, 1867, Unpublished paper.

¹⁶Richard Howard, "The Reorganized Church in Illinois, 1852-82: Search for Identity," *Dialogue*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1970), p. 75.

¹⁷Peter Judd and Bruce Lindgren, *An Introduction to the Saints Church*, (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1976), p. 26.

¹⁸Alma Blair, "The Tradition of Dissent—Jason W. Briggs," A paper delivered at the John Whitmer Historical Association Conference in Independence, Missouri, September 27, 1975.

¹⁹Blair, p. 10.

²⁰Blair, p. 12.

²¹Jason Briggs, "Inspiration No. 2," *The Messenger* (September, 1876), p. 41.

²²Blair, pp. 20-21.

²³Judd and Lindgren, p. 30.

²⁴*Exploring the Faith*, p. 8.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷Carl Bangs, "Review of *Exploring the Faith*," *Courage*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (June 1971), p. 256.

²⁸Bangs, p. 255.

²⁹*World Conference Bulletin*, 1962, p. 80.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹WCB, 1964, p. 279.

³²WCB, 1964, p. 284.

³³WCB, 1966, p. 68.

³⁴WCB, 1966, p. 248.

³⁵WCB, 1968, p. 223.

³⁶William D. Russell, "Reorganized Mormon Church Beset by Controversy," *Christian Century*, June 17, 1970.

³⁷WCB, 1970, p. 115.

³⁸WCB, 1970, pp. 245-246.

³⁹Russell, p. 771.

⁴⁰WCB, 1972, p. 207.

⁴¹WCB, 1972, p. 208.

⁴²WCB, 1974, p. 8.

⁴³WCB, 1974, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁴"The Nature of the Church," First Presidency Meetings, Independence, Missouri, (January 9, 1979), p. 2.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁶"The Identity of the Church," p. 10.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁹Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York City: Harper and Row, 1965) p. 176.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*