

# Concordia Theological Monthly

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Volume 40

Article 60

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10-1-1969

## Brief Studies

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### Recommended Citation

Piepkorn, Arthur Carl (1969) "Brief Studies," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 40, Article 60.  
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol40/iss1/60>

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## BRIEF STUDIES

The material contained in these brief studies is taken from a forthcoming revision of F. E. Mayer's *The Religious Bodies of America* by Arthur Carl Piepkorn. These studies are presented here with the permission of Concordia Publishing House.

### REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

A period of confusion in the Latter Day Saints movement followed the murder of Joseph Smith Jr. Late in 1851 Zenas H. Gurley Sr. (1801—1871) and Jason W. Briggs (1821—1899) both reported similar revelations. Gurley told how God had said to him: "In mine own due time I will call upon the seed of Joseph Smith and will bring one forth and he shall be mighty and strong and he shall preside over the high priesthood of my church." Briggs says that he had heard a voice, which he identified with the Holy Spirit, assure him that "God [would] raise up a prophet to complete His work," and that about 10 or 15 days later the Holy Spirit declared to him: "The successor of Joseph Smith is Joseph Smith, the son of Joseph Smith, the prophet. It is his right by lineage."<sup>1</sup>

At a conference which Briggs, Gurley, and a few others held in Beloit, Wis., in 1852 they determined to reorganize the church with Joseph Smith III (1832 to 1914), the son of the founder of the movement, whom Joseph Smith Jr. had designated as his successor, presumably at Liberty, Mo., in 1839, as president.

The "New Organization" which they envisioned came into being at Argyle, Wis., the following year. It denounced Brigham Young's assumption of leadership, committed the organization to the principle "that the

<sup>1</sup> Inez David Smith, *The Story of the Church*, 7th ed. (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1964), pp. 393, 403.

successor of Joseph Smith, Junior, as the Presiding High Priest of the Melchisedec Priesthood, must of necessity be the seed of Joseph Smith, Junior, in fulfillment of the law and promises of God." After first refusing the office of the presidency, Joseph III in 1859 indicated his willingness to accept it. At a conference in Amboy, Ill., the following year, the New Organization formally chose Joseph as its head. He exercised the presidency for the next 54 years. To date, the subsequent presidents have all been descendants of Joseph Smith Jr., but the Reorganized Church sees the principle of "lineal descent" as only one factor, and not the overriding one, in selecting the president of the church. It envisions the possibility that at some future date the Holy Spirit might select as president someone who is not in the line of physical descent from the founder.<sup>2</sup>

The New Organization took the name Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1869. Two court actions at the state level, in Ohio in 1880 and in Missouri in 1894, have declared it to be the

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Clifford A. Cole, president of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, dated May 5, 1966. Significant in this connection is the exposition of the principles involved that Joseph Smith III set forth shortly before his death in connection with the designation of his eldest living son, Frederick Madison Smith (1874—1946), as his successor (Joseph Smith, "Editorial: A Letter of Instruction," *The Saints' Herald*, 59 [1912], 241—48). Currently there are at least 190 descendants of Joseph Smith Jr. in the Reorganized Church ("The Other Saints," *Time*, April 29, 1966, p. 74), but only one of them, the president and prophet of the church, William Wallace Smith (born 1900), is a member of the Joint Council consisting of the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Presiding Bishopric.



legal continuation of the religious body that Joseph Smith Jr. organized in 1830.

The Reorganized Church accepts the Thirteen Articles of Faith that the founder formulated. It affirms belief in one God; in Christ as the Father's only begotten Son, who came into the world that human beings might have a more abundant life by making His teachings the basis for right living in every area of human existence; in the Holy Spirit; in the authority of the Bible, the *Book of Mormon*, and the *Book of the Doctrine and Covenants*; in the openness of the canon of divine scripture and the continuity of divine revelation through the president and prophet of the church; in the restoration of the church of Christ on the New Testament pattern; in the necessity of faith in God and of repentance; in baptism by immersion; in the laying on of hands of the priesthood for the reception of the Holy Spirit; in the return of Christ and His millennial reign; in the resurrection of the dead; and in rewards and punishments in the hereafter on the basis of conduct in this life.

It teaches tithing of the individual's annual income after he has met his needs and just wants as a divine plan. It has a special concern for developing a social consciousness that views the possession of property as stewardship for social ends and not as a means for private gain. Each individual must strive to develop his capabilities for service for the sake of the common good.

It also accepts the 1831 revelation reported by Joseph Smith Jr., which identifies Independence, Mo., as the "center place" of gathering of the membership, the site of the temple, and a place for preparing for and demonstrating the Christian way of life.

It appeals to Joseph Smith Jr. himself in its rejection of polygamy.<sup>3</sup> It disapproves the

<sup>3</sup> Section CI, "Marriage," in Joseph Smith Jr. and others, *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God* (Kirtland,

doctrine of a plurality of gods; disavows the designation "Mormons" for its membership; and admits Negroes to the priesthood.

Relations between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the Reorganized Church were for a long time very tense; the former regarded the latter as apostates and heretics. In recent years relations have become much more cordial, and the differences are described as "problems of doctrinal interpretation." At the same time, the Reorganized Church, without compromising its convictions, has likewise manifested an interest in the ecumenical movement.

Traditionally the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has been reluctant to make any statements that it would request its members to subscribe to as tests of faith. Accompanying this attitude has been considerable leniency in allowing members to express a variety of theological ideas in the church's literature. In recent years it has found itself, like many other denominations, confronted with such a wide range of theological interpretation that the leadership has been concerned about the unity of the faith of the membership. The first of the five major objectives for the next decade presented to the world conference of

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Ohio: F. G. Williams and Co., 1835), p. 251: "You both mutually agree to be each other's companion, husband and wife, observing the legal rights belonging to this condition; that is keeping yourselves wholly for each other, and from all others, during your lives." . . . Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in the case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again." *The Book of Doctrine and Covenants . . . The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, seventh printing (Independence, Mo.: Herald Publishing House, 1966), pp. 304—305, points out that the General Assembly of August 17, 1835, adopted this article (which the 1952/1966 edition numbers "Section 111") by unanimous vote.



the denomination in 1966 was to "clarify the theology of the church and unify the membership in their faith." In mid-1967 a committee appointed by the First Presidency to give leadership in setting up means of study, communication, and dialog to achieve the cited objective had begun drafting a statement of faith for further study and discussion. The draft statement on the God-head reads:

We believe in God the eternal Father, source and center of all love and life and truth, who is almighty, infinite, and unchanging, in whom, and through whom, and by whom all things exist and have their being.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, who is from everlasting to everlasting; through whom all things were made; who is God in the flesh, being incarnate by the Holy Spirit for man's salvation; who was crucified, died, and rose again; who is mediator between God and man, and the judge of both the living and the dead; whose dominion has no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the living presence of the Father and the Son in power and intelligence and love, who works in men's minds and hearts, freeing them from sin, uniting them with him as sons of God, and with each other as brethren in his family. The Spirit bears record of the Father and of the Son, which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Apostle Cole, dated Aug. 25, 1967. In commenting on this draft statement, Apostle Cole stated: "This is not the official statement of the church, but probably comes closest to expressing a well thought through and sober statement of our faith regarding the Trinity. . . . [While] we do not subscribe to any creed as a statement of faith required of those in good fellowship in the church, we would not find any conflict between our faith regarding the Holy Trinity and the statements set forth in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. In making this statement, I am fully aware that there are individuals in the church that have written material reflecting [other] ideas . . . but these do not reflect the general feeling either of the General Church officers, or of the majority of the membership of our church." (At a baptism the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints requires the baptizing elder

The First Presidency consists of three high priests; together with the Presiding Bishopric, also of three members, and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, it forms the Joint Council. The Twelve represent the Presidency in the field, and, aided by Quorums of the Seventy, direct missionary activity. The bishops are responsible for the financial operations of the church. The delegate general conference meets every two years. It must act on all doctrinal, policy, and legislative matters.

The headquarters are in Independence, Mo. In addition to adherents in Europe and the Commonwealth, the Reorganized Church has foreign missions in Japan, Korea, India, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines Republic, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Society Islands. It has 1,093 churches in the United States and Canada, with an inclusive membership of 182,253.<sup>5</sup>

to say to the candidate for baptism, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Then he is to immerse the candidate in water, and the two are to come forth again out of the water. [*The Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, 17:21, p. 45; see also 36:1, pp. 79—80]

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Apostle Cole, dated Aug. 16, 1967. In 1917/1918 R. C. Evans, second counselor, left the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and organized the Church of Christian Brotherhood at Toronto, Ontario (Kate B. Carter, *Denominations That Base Their Belief on the Teachings of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1962], p. 37; letter from Pastor A. G. Trueblood, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 251 Blake Avenue, Willowdale, Ontario, dated Nov. 13, 1968). The movement never expanded beyond the original Toronto congregation and disbanded officially in 1966 (letter from Apostle Cole, dated Sept. 26, 1968). The Zionite Movement referred to by Mrs. Carter (*ibid.*) as having been led by John Zahnd (born 1877) and Joseph Florey (1844—1923) dated back to 1918, when the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints expelled Florey for apostasy. It was



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ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

THE CHURCH OF GOD,  
WORLD HEADQUARTERS

From 1886, when Richard B. Spurling Sr. and his companions organized the Christian Union, to 1943, when Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson died, the organizations now known as the Church of God, World Headquarters, the Church of God of Prophecy, and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) share in varying degrees not only a common name but a common history.<sup>1</sup>

After the division in the "Tomlinson Church of God" that followed the elder Tomlinson's death, his older son, Homer A. Tomlinson (1892—1968), observed 30 days of mourning for his father and then, persuaded that he was still the general overseer of the authentic Church of God by his father's choice, he convoked an assembly of the whole church in New York in December 1943. At this assembly, in his own words, "in mighty anointings [he] was confirmed in his position."<sup>2</sup> Beginning with a

never apparently organized formally and legally as a church body and seems not to have survived the early 1920s. In spite of his advocacy of Zionic views, Florey never left the Reorganized Church (cited letter from Apostle Cole).

<sup>1</sup> Homer A. Tomlinson, late Bishop of the Church of God, World Headquarters, referred to the three groups respectively as the Third Part, the Second Part, and the First Part of the Church of God movement, by way of allusion to Zech. 13:8-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Diary of A. J. Tomlinson*, ed. Homer A. Tomlinson, 2 (Queens Village, N. Y.: The

single church, his own, in New York he reorganized as the Church of God, World Headquarters, those of his father's followers who were loyal to him and resumed his evangelistic activities.

The published teachings of the Church of God, World Headquarters, are identical almost word for word with the 29 teachings of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.).<sup>3</sup> The major stress falls on the positions enunciated by Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson on divine healing, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues as evidence, Christ's premillennial second coming, and the signs of Mark 16:17-18, that are to follow believers.<sup>4</sup>

Homer A. Tomlinson taught in the official newspaper of the Church of God, World Headquarters, that Jesus is not God, but only the Son of God.<sup>5</sup> In 1953 he urged upon his

Church of God, World Headquarters, 1953), 110.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the 29 teachings of the Church of God, World Headquarters, see *The Church of God*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (March 1, 1969), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Including protection against venomous snakes, immunity to the drinking of lethal poison, and the ability to raise the dead (*ibid.*, Vol. 23, No. 16 [Aug. 15, 1966], 4).

<sup>5</sup> "Jesus is not God. . . . Jesus himself nearly always referred to himself as 'the Son of Man,' though he did not hesitate to identify himself as the Son of God. . . . [St. Paul] said that Jesus would himself turn the kingdom, his Father's kingdom, over to the God of Abraham, and he would be all in all, while Jesus himself would be just one of the brethren. . . . Our brethren of Israel, of Islam, can now realize that we as Christians hold to the same God the Father, the God of Abraham, even as they do. We count Jesus the Son of God even as we count them, all of them, the sons of God, the children of God, if they walk in the ways of righteousness. . . . The great God of heaven and earth through Jesus would show that men and women of this flesh could live without sin, could be a blessing to others. . . . Jesus set the example for goodness and righteousness. We come in his name to the Father . . . for then, by referring to him,



church three objectives: (1) peace on earth and an end to war among nations by a wholesale intercontinental population transfer of 280 million people; (2) the abolition of poverty; and (3) development of a glorious church, "holy and without blemish."<sup>6</sup> In announcing a new autobiographical history of the Church of God movement in December 1967, Tomlinson promised that the years 1968 through 1974 would take their place as "the seven best years of history" since the seven good years of Joseph in Egypt; he called on his church and the whole world to be ready by Oct. 7, 1975, for Christ's second coming.<sup>7</sup>

Tomlinson was an indefatigable traveler with a flair for the dramatic. In 1943 he visited 43 countries "to proclaim revival of religion." In 1952 he went to 69 lands, "going boldly for peace on earth" and holding aloft "the All-Nations banner of love given him by his father."<sup>8</sup> Beginning in 1954, he visited the capitals of 101 nations over the next 12 years. Persuaded that he had been chosen in a revelation to be "the king of all nations of men in righteousness,"

the Father knows that we will be among those who want goodness and righteousness, as Jesus proclaimed. Jesus is not here now, nor his apostles, but we are here, and are now doing far more than Jesus did. . . . [Jesus] sent forth only eighty-two missionaries. . . . From 1926 to 1936, in just ten years, the one church I served as pastor, located at 9010 168th St., Jamaica, New York, sent forth more than ten thousand missionaries, the best trained in all history of Christian missions for the work, to every nation in the world." (Ibid., Vol. 24, No. 11 [June 1, 1967], 1—2) — Ministers of the Church of God, World Headquarters, continue to baptize "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

<sup>6</sup> *Diary*, 2, 114, 122.

<sup>7</sup> News release, "'Seven Years of Good' to Start Jan. 1st," The Church of God, Queens Village, New York, dated December 15, 1967; *The Church of God*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan. 1, 1968), 1; No. 2 (Feb. 1, 1968), 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Diary*, 2, 113.

he enthroned himself in some public place in each capital, promising the nation in question that its days of wars were over. For this ceremony he habitually wore a scarlet academic gown, a crown "with 14 tines" on his head and the red, white, and purple banner of the Church of God, World Headquarters, suspended from his neck. The 101st "coronation" took place on Friday, Oct. 7, 1966, in Zion Square in Jerusalem coincident with the opening of the church's world headquarters near Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> By standing and kneeling in prayer at the Brandenburg Gate that divides East and West Berlin in 1952, Tomlinson asserts that he kept the "cold war" from erupting into a "hot war" for the next 16 years.<sup>10</sup>

For the period Aug. 1 to Sept. 9, 1967, he announced a 40-day fast for "peace on earth" after what he described as the Biblical pattern, taking only an occasional cup of black coffee and drinking sparingly of water and fruit juices, principally of the white grapes of Eshcol "flown in especially for him from the Holy Land."<sup>11</sup>

In 1952, in 1960, in 1964, and again in 1968 Tomlinson ran for the presidency of the United States of America as the Theocratic Party's candidate with the slogan "government under God through men of God."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Church of God*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (June 1, 1967), 1; No. 13 (July 1, 1967), 1; William Whitworth, "Profiles on the Tide of the Times: Bishop Homer A. Tomlinson," *The New Yorker*, Vol. 42, No. 31 (Sept. 24, 1966), 67 to 108. Tomlinson noted that the only capitals that refused to allow him to proceed with his coronation rite were Saigon, South Vietnam, Hanoi, North Vietnam, and Washington, D. C.

<sup>10</sup> *The Church of God*, Vol. 24, No. 11 (June 1, 1967), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 24, No. 14 (Aug. 1, 1967), 1. After losing 25 pounds in 25 days, Tomlinson discontinued his fast, but ate sparingly of solid food for the remainder of the 40 days (*ibid.*, No. 16 [Oct. 1, 1967], 3).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Feb. 1, 1968), 1, 3; No. 3 (March 1, 1968), 1; No. 7 (July 1,



The perennial platform of the Theocratic Party, drafted by Tomlinson, its chairman, has four sets of 12 laws each. The first set, for individuals, consists of the Ten Commandments, plus the injunctions, "This is my beloved son, hear ye him," and, "Love one another." The second set, for world government, calls for one gathering of nations under one world ruler, with each nation choosing a national ruler subject to the world ruler's approval. Nations which do not unite with the others or which resort to war will suffer drought and plague. An annual October gathering (in which only men would be heard, while women would keep silent) would not pass laws, but only make recommendations. Adherence to the laws of the platform would be as the result of teaching, not force. All nations would bring a tenth

1968), 2. In 1967 Tomlinson was the keynote speaker at the convention which kicked off the Theocratic Party's 1968 campaign. Church of God Bishop William ("Bill") R. Rogers of Fulton, Mo., was apparently to have been the standard bearer. His announced strategy plans called for him to perform "Joshua-Jericho 'exploits'" around every county court house and state capitol in all 50 states. He would walk six times around the building "with steady military cadence of 160 ft. per minute, silent, speaking to none, save to kneel in prayer to Almighty God for the blessings of God upon the whole state" or county. On the seventh round the athletic 44-year-old bishop would "start with a leap and a shout, blow his 37-inch hunting horn (from a Texas Longhorn) to all the voters of the state [or county, and] race around the . . . edifice at breakneck speed in his fervor" (ibid., Vol. 24, No. 10 [May 15, 1967], 1; 2-page flyer headed "Bill Rogers for U.S. President, 1968"). But on Feb. 13, 1968, Tomlinson suddenly announced that he would propose Lyndon B. Johnson as the Theocratic Party's candidate at its nominating convention, because he "has led America half-way into the Kingdom of God by his help for the poor, the sick and the afflicted, the children and the aged, in the greatest manifestation of Christian love this age has ever known." Ultimately, however, the party nominated Tomlinson for the presidency for the fourth time.

of their national income to Jerusalem. The third set of laws, for individual nations, calls for the union of church and state in Jesus, but with freedom of worship and liberty. Tithes instead of taxes would support the church-state, which would follow the new revelations that it would receive for government and peace. The 1965 scale of wages, profits, and progress would be maintained by unlimited production and free enterprise. All nations and races would be equal. Wars, crime, delinquency, divorces, and the use of tobacco, intoxicants, and narcotics would be abolished. There would be Bible reading and prayer in all schools. Roman and English law would be abandoned for new civil and criminal codes. These new codes would constitute the fourth set of principles. Repentant criminals would be forgiven 490 times, but unrepentant criminals would be punished under the present codes. The jury system would give way to trial before godly judges, who would execute punishment by their word and not by force. The punishment would affect the body; it might take the form of sickness or it might even be death. Prisons would become refugees and cities of safety, to give criminals time to repent. Thieves would show their repentance by restoring fourfold what they had taken. Civil litigants would award adversaries double, and covetous persons would be sentenced to lose everything. During the changeover to these new principles, all repentant prisoners would be set free and civil litigants would withdraw all pending actions and would reconsider.<sup>13</sup>

Officials in the Church of God, World

<sup>13</sup> *The Church of God*, Vol. 25, No. 6 (June 1, 1968), 2. Tomlinson's activity in the Theocratic Party was in a sense a reversal of the position which the Church of God movement took in 1908, when it affirmed its opposition "to the union of church and State under any circumstances." At the same time, Tomlinson's political activities revealed a social concern that Pentecostalism's critics claim not to find generally in the movement.



Headquarters, are appointed, not elected. The authority of the Bishop of the Church of God (formerly general overseer)<sup>14</sup> is greater than that of the head of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) or the Church of God of Prophecy.

The Church of God, World Headquarters, holds two assemblies annually, a national assembly in the United States, usually in the Middle West, and an October "world assembly" in Jerusalem. The latter is linked with a tour of the Holy Land.

Since Homer Tomlinson's death, the gen-

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<sup>14</sup> The title was changed in 1966, although Tomlinson continued to use it. The 1966 assembly also abolished the office of state overseer, partly because of "the number of overseers who have left the church and formed other church bodies" (St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, Aug. 20, 1966).

eral overseership of the church body has devolved on Bishop V. M. Bullen, and the headquarters for the United States of America has been moved from Queens Village, N. Y., to 2504 Arrow Wood Drive, Southeast, Huntsville, Ala. The Church of God, World Headquarters, claims 1,921 churches in the United States with a total membership of 73,868. The Church of God, World Headquarters, carries on foreign missions in Panama, Haiti, and Israel.

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