

RLDS NAMES NON-SMITH SUCCESSOR

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints broke a 135-year practice in April by naming a prophet-president who is not a descendant of Joseph Smith Jr. At the April conference, W. Grant McMurray was selected to lead the church.

The transition for prophet-president McMurray was eased by resigning leader Wallace B. Smith, who had expressed his preference for McMurray several months before. On April 15, McMurray was voted nearly unanimously into the RLDS church's top office.

Smith will stay on as president emeritus after spending 18 years as the church's leader. Under his administration, the church began ordaining women, built its second temple (located next to its headquarters in Independence, Mo.), and expanded membership into 36 countries, claiming 245,000 members.

RLDS conferees also discussed a possible change in the church's name and debated the issue of homosexuality.

No consensus was reached on the name change. Some delegates strongly endorsed fuller participation of homosexuals within their congregations stating that the church's position on homosexuality is "just out-of-date [and] old-fashioned." Others actively opposed it, suggesting that "the next step could result in sanctioning acts such as bestiality and pedophilia." A task force had been formed last fall at the request of the First Presidency to look into the homosexual issue. However, this task force does not have a time frame, nor is it obligated to report to the World Conference.

—AMG

MEXICANS BLOCK MORMON TEMPLE

Following opposition from local Roman Catholics and concern over urban development issues, city officials in Monterrey, Mexico, have blocked construction of a temple by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to a Religious News Service report, "thousands of Catholics gathered signatures and purchased advertisements in newspapers protesting the temple construction."

In spite of the public protest, Monterrey officials maintain that their decision was not based upon the community's outcry, but that the plans for the construction of the structure "did not comply with the city's urban development laws."

The initial plan for building of what was to be the country's second Mormon temple began in an effort to accommodate the growing LDS population in Mexico. The temple was to accommodate the 200,000 Latter-day Saints who make up 49 congregations in northern Mexico. However, because of strict requirements imposed by the Mormon church upon its adherents, only a small fraction can get permission to enter the temple after its dedication. The LDS church claims a total membership of 720,000 in the Latin American country.

L. Don LeFevre, LDS representative, said "the church would work toward reaching an agreement with the Monterrey officials and dispelling misconceptions [about church doctrine and practice] within the community," the Religious News Service reported.

The country's only LDS temple is in Mexico City and was completed in 1983.

—MKG

RESURRECTION BATTLE WITH EFCA ENDS

The Evangelical Free Church of America recently reaffirmed its stand on the belief in the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ and believers. The denomination's declaration, publicized in late January, has ended the serious concerns and criticisms of a number of evangelical scholars and a coalition of 155 apologetic and counter-cult ministries. Personal Freedom Outreach was part of the initial alliance of ministries that formed in October 1990.

The conflict arose from the writings of Professor Murray Harris of the EFCA's seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (now Trinity International University) in Deerfield, Ill. Harris contended in two works, *Raised Immortal* and *From Grave to Glory*, that the nature of Christ's resurrection was one of "imma-

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for the dead.

Absent from the list is the principle that the first-century believers “continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). Adam Clarke, in his *Commentary on the Bible*, writes the Church’s response to the apostles’ doctrine: “They received it, retained it, and acted on its principles” (pg. 962).

Early believers subscribed to the apostles’ authority on the teaching of Scripture and accepted it as the very Word of God. In Christ’s true Church there is nothing optional about believing the apostles’ doctrine. We do not find any record of early Christians dismissing the apostles’ clear teaching with “That’s just Peter’s opinion!” or “That’s just Paul’s opinion!” Those who opposed it, such as Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:18), were branded heretics.

Equally troublesome for Mormons is the extent to which one can apply the rationalization of “that’s just his opinion.” Does it apply to Joseph Smith Jr.’s claim that God and Jesus Christ told him that all the churches were wrong and an abomination? Can we apply it to Smith’s teaching that God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man? Or can we apply it to Spencer W. Kimball’s 1978 proclamation that allowed black people to join the Mormon priesthood?

Utah Mission’s Robert McKay highlighted this error in Mormon logic recently:

“Do you see where this leads? If statements that a Mormon doesn’t want to accept can be brushed off as private opinions without authority, so can other statements. If declarations that make the church look bad are mere opinions, so are statements that make the church look good. If a General Authority said something that the Mormon doesn’t believe and it was just that man’s opinion, then the things that the Mormon does believe are also just someone’s opinion” (*The Evangel*, January/February 1996, pg. 8).

Christians need to be aware that in Christ’s Church, adherence to the apostle’s doctrine has never been an option. Their divinely inspired teachings were far more than “just someone’s opinion.”

—MKG

News Updates

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riality” and that He now possesses a “nonfleshly” body in heaven. Harris further asserted that the “believer’s resurrection body will come from heaven, not the grave.” (See further, *The Quarterly Journal*,

Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 5-8 and Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 2, 14-15.)

At the forefront of bringing resolution to the disagreement was Duane Magnani of Witness, Inc. Magnani, a former Jehovah’s Witness, had charged that Harris’ statements paralleled the heretical beliefs of the Watchtower Society. “If there was not a physical resurrection, there wasn’t a resurrection. The only kind of resurrection in the Bible is physical,” Magnani said.

In its statement of reaffirmation, the Evangelical Free Church said, “[its] leadership reaffirms unitedly and unequivocally the belief that the same body in which Jesus was crucified and was raised again, an immortal body, but nevertheless a physical body with flesh and bones; and that the dead bodies of believers will be raised immortal from the grave when Christ returns.”

A resolution letter dated Jan. 29, 1996, and jointly signed by Magnani, Dr. Paul A. Cedar, president of the EFCA, and renown Christian apologist Dr. Norman L. Geisler stated that the “disagreement has passed” and announced that “through much prayer and good discussion, we have seen that God is faithful to bring us together in brotherly reconciliation.”

—MKG

Book Reviews

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careful exegete who brings to his work years of experience as a biblical counselor. His logic is flawless and meticulous. His research is practical and valuable in helping readers understand how to wage war against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

His conclusion expresses his deep desire to help us reclaim true spiritual warfare:

“Reclaiming spiritual warfare means learning afresh how God pursues His glory in our lives. It means gaining an understanding of progressive sanctification in a Christian culture habituated to look for quick fixes. It means learning to see heroic dramas played out in tiny corners of life. It means becoming human, renewed in the image of Jesus Christ — the pioneer and perfecter of faith. It means learning how to become Christians.”

So-called “power encounters” may seem to have excitement and drama. But they are really a detour from Christ’s walk. This book could bring biblical sanity back to believers and help heal divisions caused by erroneous teachings.

—GRF