

Religion and the Challenge of Modernity: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the United States Today, edited by Danny L. Jorgensen and Joni Wilson. Academic Studies in Religion and the Social Order. Binghamton: Global Publications, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2001. 288 pp. Tables, graphs, notes, index. \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer A. R. Blair is professor emeritus of history at Graceland University, Lamoni, Iowa. He is a past president of the John Whitmer Historical Association and has contributed to various Mormon history publications.

This collection of nine articles is significant for its discussion of sociological and historical theories of the effects of "modernity" and "post-modernity" on religion in the United States. The articles are written with the nonspecialist in mind, but are sound academically. All of the articles use the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as a case study, which narrows the theoretical applications but gives a more detailed study of the effects of modernity on a denomination that has been radically transformed in the past four decades.

Changes in the church include ordaining women, opening communion to other Christians, restructuring some of its theology, abandoning claims to exclusive religious authority, setting its mission to be a "peace church," and recently renaming itself "Community of Christ." As the second-largest surviving group of the religious movement begun by Joseph Smith in 1830, the Reorganized Latter Day Saint church had its roots in the Midwest, with its major strength in Iowa for many years. From 1881 to 1905 its headquarters were in Lamoni, Iowa, a community it was influential in founding. Graceland University, begun in 1895, is sponsored by the denomination, which still has many congregations throughout the state. This book raises the question of its continued survival in the face of the loss of members and resources as it has adjusted to new conditions.

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