

Thomas G. Alexander

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CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE
CHANGE IN THE PROGRESSIVE
PERIOD, 1898–1930

BETWEEN 1898 and 1930, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints undertook a number of significant administrative changes that helped it to function more effectively. Perhaps the most significant began during the administration of President Lorenzo Snow. Financial distress of oppressive magnitude compounded the problems that the Church faced during the 1890s. Through provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, the federal government had confiscated most of the Church's secular properties. Later, in an effort to save members from the effects of the depression that followed the international financial collapse of 1893, the Church incurred debts that could not easily be repaid to found various business enterprises. Moreover, in part because members knew that the federal government was confiscating Church properties, tithing receipts declined from an average of more than

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\$500,000 a year in the 1880s to approximately \$350,000 in the year 1890. The depression caused tithing revenues to decline even more, and as early as 1893, Church leadership had begun borrowing funds from stakes to try to finance various activities. This borrowing proved only a stopgap measure, and by mid-1898 the Church stood \$2.3 million in debt, principally to investment bankers outside of Utah.¹

By late 1898, the excessive debt had become intolerable, and President Lorenzo Snow moved in several ways to promote the Church's financial solvency. First, to refinance the debt, the Church issued \$1.5 million in 6 percent bonds. Church leaders estimated revenues from tithes at just under \$1 million per year at the time, and they estimated the value of Church property at \$4 million to \$6 million. They knew that the Church's income had been increasing at a rate of about 10 percent per year. They planned to retire the bonds by pledging \$80,000 from tithing revenues—including \$30,000 for interest—annually.² Second, President Snow revived a policy inaugurated by President Woodruff in the late 1880s. He decided to sell the Church's interest in some businesses. Unlike Woodruff, however, he did not engage in deficit financing to invest in other enterprises. In December 1899, Church officers found that the Sterling mining property in Nevada had proved unproductive, and instead of pouring more money into the venture, they let their claims lapse at a loss of more than \$300,000. They also authorized Elder Heber J. Grant to wind up affairs of the Utah Loan and Trust Company of Ogden, also at a considerable loss.³

The efforts to promote increased financial stability had their spiritual side as well. In May 1899, Lorenzo Snow and a large party of General Authorities traveled to St. George, which was experiencing a prolonged drought. In a sermon that has become legendary in Mormon history, President Snow promised the Saints that if they would pay a full tithing the Lord would "open the windows of heaven" and bless them. On the way home he witnessed to his associates that the Lord had given him a revelation. He admonished them, under covenant, to obey the law of tithing. On June 12 and again on July 2, 1899, in special meetings, President Snow and other

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General Authorities emphasized the need for Church members to pay a tenth. Brigham Young Jr., one of the Twelve, recorded in his journal that “the spirit of the Lord testified that all this was His mind.”⁴

In line with this reemphasis, the Twelve sought out bishops and stake presidents who had failed to contribute their own tithing and “labor[ed] with them kindly . . . [to] help them to recover lost ground.” By 1900, Anthon H. Lund of the Twelve commented on the increase in tithing. Previously he had said that he once thought there was a great deal of formality in preaching the word. After seeing the increase in revenues that preaching brought, he believed that preaching carried a great deal of power as well. Tithing revenues had increased from \$800,000 to \$1.3 million in just one year.⁵

Until 1899 the Church had instituted virtually no budgetary control. Church leaders seem to have made expenditures on an ad hoc basis. In December 1898, when Lorenzo Snow gave Brigham Young Jr. papers on the Church’s debt, Young had to admit, “It is a mystery to me where these millions have gone to say nothing of the 6 or 700,000 dollars income we have every year which for years has vanished like the rest.”⁶ President Snow himself acknowledged he had worked in the dark. On January 5, 1899, Elder John Henry Smith suggested that the Church appoint an auditing committee to oversee expenditures. The First Presidency and the Twelve agreed. The First Presidency called Elders Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, Ruder Clawson, and Heber J. Grant, of the Twelve, for the task. By December 1901, although the committee had been operating for nearly three years, the First Presidency still found accounts of the Church somewhat in disarray, and the committee persuaded them to open a new set of books. The Church had not closed the books for many years, and they erroneously showed the Church to be \$43,000 in debt! The new books showed that the Church actually held more in property and income than it owed, and Lorenzo Snow found he had rightly estimated that the Church could begin to pay off obligations held by private creditors.⁷

By 1908, the Church had not only retired its debt but had sufficient cash flow to complete a reform first contemplated in 1888. In January 1908,

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the Presiding Bishopric and First Presidency agreed that they would no longer use tithing scrip (essentially Church-issued paper money). This meant that Church transactions were to be made entirely on a cash-only basis. The Church also began to discourage members from paying tithing in kind—that is, in commodities such as wheat, eggs, and livestock. Part of the reason for the change appears to have been the substantial loss in the value of commodities as they remained in storage. The system seems also to have made easier the valuation of funds transferred between units.⁸

Though the First Presidency and Twelve considered the Church's temporal affairs, principal responsibility for many of these matters fell upon the Presiding Bishopric. By December 1907, reports indicated that seventy-seven-year-old Presiding Bishop William B. Preston had become so ill and weak that he could no longer function. He died in August 1908. First counselor Robert T. Burton had carried most of the burden of the office, but after his death in November 1907, the whole load fell upon second counselor Orrin P. Miller.⁹ The First Presidency and Twelve gave the matter prayerful consideration, and in December 1907 President Smith called Charles W. Nibley to his office. "Charlie," he addressed his old friend, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints needs a Presiding Bishop and you have been chosen for the place." Nibley accepted the call and chose Orrin P. Miller as his first counselor and David A. Smith, a son of Joseph F. Smith, as his second counselor.¹⁰

Nibley, a successful businessman, inaugurated many reforms that modernized and rationalized Church administration, including the shift from scrip to cash and improvements in record keeping. All of these things had become second nature to Nibley in his secular business career. Previously, though wards kept membership records, the Church expected members to carry their own records, called recommends at the time, from ward to ward as they moved. In many cases records went unexamined and carried inaccuracies. In 1901, following a recommendation by the Church auditing committee, the Church had inaugurated a ward "Record Day" during the annual ward conference. Members were to come in at that time and examine

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their records. In addition, a circular letter of February 1902 encouraged wards, stakes, and auxiliaries to keep their records in order. The Church encouraged ward officers to contact members before they moved to see that “they procure their recommends” to take with them.¹¹

Bishop Nibley addressed problems of inaccuracies and misplaced records by instituting centralized records management. He assigned responsibility for record keeping to the wards rather than the members. The Church expected the wards to maintain membership records, and when a member moved from one ward to another, bishops were to send the records to the Presiding Bishop’s Office, which served as a clearinghouse. In addition, instead of waiting for members to come in to examine their records, the bishops were required to make a house-to-house canvass of their wards at least once per year to correct individual records.¹²

Before 1901, local trustees had held the titles to ward property. They registered the title in their names with county authorities. Beginning in 1901, however, Utah law allowed a bishop to establish a corporation sole. The title to his ward’s property vested in him and transferred to his successor upon his death or release.¹³ Stake presidents made similar arrangements for stake property.

For members today who recognize the central role of priesthood quorums in the lives of Church members, it may be difficult to understand the relative insignificance of quorums in the late 1890s. Between Brigham Young’s 1877 priesthood reorganization and the priesthood reorganization of the first decade of the twentieth century, the general Church, the ward, and, to a lesser extent, the auxiliary organizations, carried out virtually all functions that directly affected the lives of Church members. Many members received gospel instruction at Primary, Sunday School, religion classes, Relief Society, Mutual Improvement Association, and sacrament meeting. The bishop organized and supervised ward teaching, and the bishopric and Relief Society coordinated virtually all welfare and Church-service functions. In short, members—including priesthood holders—functioned as ward and auxiliary members rather than as quorum members. Indeed,

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many were not enrolled in a quorum, and many quorums met infrequently in poorly attended Monday evening meetings.

Auxiliaries played a less important role as well. Unlike the situation today where all members belong to auxiliary organizations according to their gender and age, in the early twentieth century, membership in auxiliaries was voluntary. Many members belonged to none. Many women did not belong to the Relief Society. Attendance at ward sacrament services was very low by present standards, generally under 15 percent. As late as 1900, most members seemed to perceive their primary community to be the general Church, and because of that Saints could be seen as active members whose lives were quite different from those we tend to view as active today.¹⁴

Perhaps to strengthen the Church in the time of transition and in the increasingly pluralistic society in which the Church members lived, the First Presidency and Twelve recognized the need for increased priesthood activity. The change originated with the quorums of the seventies. In 1900, Lorenzo Snow taught that seventies owed primary allegiance to their quorums rather than to the wards and auxiliaries. In 1901, the First Presidency and Twelve urged elders, high priests, and other quorums to hold regular meetings and to enroll in their quorums all priesthood holders living within the ward or stake's jurisdiction. If a priesthood holder refused enrollment, the quorum leader was to report him to the high council for possible ecclesiastical court action.¹⁵

To a large extent, the organization of the seventies quorums made their leadership in vitalizing their quorums easier than other priesthood quorums. In part, this was possible because although the role of members of the First Council of the Seventy as General Authorities was not well defined, they had a clear function as leaders of seventies' work in the Church. Unlike other quorums, the First Council provided central direction for the seventies and could develop and disseminate programs and lead out in priesthood reorganization.

In October 1902, the First Council proposed measures to promote systematic instruction and activation. The seven presidents called J. Golden

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Kimball, Brigham H. Roberts, Rulon S. Wells, and Joseph W. McMurrin from among their number to plan a course of action. By October 15, Roberts reported that he and Kimball had completed a rough draft of a proposed series of lessons. This draft eventually led to the publication of a course of study entitled *The Seventies Course in Theology*, apparently a first for any of the priesthood quorums in the Church.¹⁶

Throughout 1903, as the seventies tried to bring about increased activity, they encountered opposition from stake presidents and bishops who had traditionally directed local Church activities. Because the quorums had functioned ineffectively as missionaries, the local authorities had called seventies to serve as Sunday School or MIA teachers and as members of bishoprics. One seventy suggested, in fact, that instead of holding regular quorum meetings, the members might just as well attend and study the MIA lessons. The First Council ruled, however, that seventies should conduct their own meetings and follow the outlined course of study instead of merging with auxiliary organizations.¹⁷

After leading out in the development of a course of study, the seventies turned to the reform of their meeting schedule. Like most other quorums, the seventies held their infrequent meetings on Monday evenings. However, since seventies were called as missionaries and other assignments infringed upon this primary responsibility, they could make the case for holding meetings on Sunday as a means of invigorating the quorums. In January 1907, the First Council asked the First Presidency and Twelve to approve a change in seventies quorums' meeting times from Monday evening to the more convenient Sunday morning between nine and twelve. This was such a radical proposal that three hours of discussion preceded approval. The First Presidency then sent a circular letter to local ecclesiastical officers emphasizing that seventies might determine the time of their meeting on Sunday morning and that if any seventies taught Sunday School, which also met on Sunday mornings, bishops should release them. Seventies held the first meetings under this new schedule on November 3, 1907, with B. H. Roberts's *Seventies Course* as the lesson manual.¹⁸

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The seven presidents recognized that the new procedure and new lessons might create some problems, and in an effort to assist in resolving difficulties, the *Improvement Era* added a new section, “The Seventy’s Council Table,” edited by Roberts. But the anticipated difficulties still surfaced. In June 1908 members of the seventies quorum of the Union Stake objected to bishops attending their meetings. The stake presidency felt, however, that bishops had a right to attend any meeting held in the ward. In addition, seventies interpreted this emphasis on quorum meetings as releasing them from the responsibility of attending weekly sacrament meetings. Some also thought themselves relieved from allegiance to a stake since the seventies quorums were general Church rather than stake organizations.¹⁹

Because other priesthood quorums met on Monday evening, a number of stake presidents felt that Sunday seventies’ meetings caused too much confusion and that the First Presidency ought to switch the meeting back to Monday. After consideration, the First Presidency and the Twelve agreed, and a delegation met with members of the First Council to secure their approval. Because the percentage of attendance at quorum meetings had increased after the change, the seventies refused to go back to Monday even though most Apostles thought they ought to.²⁰

Where the seventies led, other quorums followed. After Brigham Young’s 1877 reorganization, twelve-year-olds were supposed to be ordained deacons. Regular movement to teacher at age fourteen and priest at age sixteen was not the rule, however, and by the turn of the century irregularities still existed in deacon ordinations. Some bishops delayed ordinations, and some followed such lax procedures that in at least one case a boy was ordained at age three. Between 1903 and 1906, the First Presidency and Twelve began strongly emphasizing the need to reorganize and regularize Aaronic Priesthood activity. Like other quorums, the Aaronic Priesthood met only irregularly on Monday evenings, and some authorities suggested that inactivity in the Aaronic Priesthood was partly responsible for the “evils in Elders Quorums.”²¹

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After urging the revitalization of the Aaronic Priesthood quorums for three years, the Twelve, through President Francis M. Lyman, laid out the approved procedure at the October general conference in 1906, that the Church followed for some time. Ordination to deacon at age twelve was to be the rule for all worthy young men. They were to serve as deacons for three years when they were eligible for ordination as teachers, who were to serve for three years. This was followed by three years as priests. Advancement to the Melchizedek Priesthood could follow at age twenty-one, but only those who were worthy were to be advanced.²²

Following the success of the seventies in revitalizing their quorums, in November 1907 a circular letter outlined the procedure which the Melchizedek Priesthood should follow under what came to be called the new priesthood movement. Stake presidents were to recommend prospective priesthood holders to the high council for approval. In the case of seventies, because some quorums covered more than one stake, the stake presidents were to consult with each other and make certain that they called only men suitable for missionary work. When seventies could no longer serve as missionaries, the stake president was to recommend them for ordination as high priests in recognition of their faithfulness. Bishops were to recommend men for ordination to elder to the stake president after securing the sustaining votes of ward members. Final approval for any Melchizedek Priesthood office required an affirmative vote at a stake priesthood meeting.²³

The Twelve followed the seventies' lead by formulating regular lessons and other procedures for the other Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthood quorums. During the fall and winter of 1908, the Apostles spent time reviewing lessons designed for use by the Aaronic Priesthood in 1909. At the same time the General Authorities placed quorums under closer control of bishops and stake presidents. High priests and seventies quorums were henceforth to be contained within the boundaries of one stake, though the seventies could have more than one quorum per stake. More than one elders quorum might exist in a stake, but each quorum must have at least a majority of the number required for a full quorum, which was ninety-six.

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Quorums of deacons, teachers, and priests were to be organized within one ward and presided over by the bishops, though the teachers and deacons were to have their own president.²⁴

Each quorum except the seventies, who met on Sunday, was to meet every Monday evening for “instruction in the formal study of the doctrines, principles and history of the gospel.” In some cases neither the instructors nor the quorum members were taking time to prepare for a discussion of the lessons, and the General Authorities attempted to deal with these pedagogical and other problems through the “Priesthood Quorums Table” in the *Improvement Era*.²⁵

Since the general Church organization had not resolved the question, a number of stakes tried rearranging the time of priesthood meeting, Sunday School, sacrament meeting, and MIA. The St. Johns Stake, for instance, held priesthood meeting on Sunday evening on three Sundays of the month in connection with YMMIA. On the fourth Sunday, the wards held a joint YM-YLMIA meeting. In 1913 the Ensign Stake adopted a plan of holding MIA and priesthood meeting on alternate Tuesday nights, but this produced disappointing results. In the Liberty, Ogden, and Fremont stakes, the other quorums joined the seventies on Sunday mornings. Those stakes found this arrangement to be “satisfactory,” producing better-than-average attendance. After these reports, the Twelve reconsidered its reluctance to hold priesthood meeting on Sundays and agreed with the possibility of having the Aaronic Priesthood classes as part of Sunday School.²⁶ The shift of priesthood meeting from Monday night to Sunday morning not only helped priesthood attendance but also boosted Sunday School activity. In fact, in light of the results, the MIA considered shifting its meeting to Sunday as well.²⁷

Perhaps the most noticeable change which took place with the new priesthood movement was increased activity. The General Priesthood Committee of the Church reported in October 1913 that priests especially paid greater attention to priesthood work. Most quorums held regular meetings, where five years before not more than 5 percent of the wards had. Attendance

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at weekly priesthood meeting increased from 16 percent in 1913 to 18 percent in 1915. Sacrament meeting attendance, which stood at 14.5 percent in 1913, increased to 17 percent in 1915. Ward teaching visits increased from 42 percent to 63 percent over the same period.²⁸

For members today, this may seem like an extremely poor showing, but the early twentieth century was a time of transition and change which one must judge on its own terms, not by the standards we would apply today. The statistics meant that, for the average Latter-day Saint, attendance at priesthood or sacrament meeting was not an important part of Church commitment. In the nineteenth century, Church leaders expected members to give their lives to the Church in the development of new communities and in the creation of new Church enterprises. This tied them to the general Church community. Church attendance and priesthood activities were secondary since members' entire beings were wrapped up in the Church. The changing statistics and the development of new programs and procedures by the general and local authorities reveal an increasing reorientation in the Church. At the present time, commitment is measured by willingness to devote time to the Church for such things as accepting mission calls; attending meetings; and participating in teaching, temple attendance, compassionate service, and welfare work. In effect, the Saints of the early twentieth century were laying the groundwork for the Church as we know it today.

Moreover, the changes that were taking place had the effect of strengthening both the general Church and the local organizations. The reemphasis on tithing and the reorganization of record keeping efforts increased the importance of the presiding and local bishops, moving primary responsibility over the definition of Church activity from the member as part of the community to the bishop as presiding authority of the ward. The priesthood reorganization, while vitalizing the quorums, also tied them more closely to the ward and stake organization, subordinating them even more to bishops and stake presidents.

The changes also had the effect of narrowing the scope of Church organization by defining the Church as part of the larger society rather than

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as a separate community. This is most apparent in the changes which took place in Church courts. After the first two decades of the twentieth century, Church members were expected to take secular disputes to civil and criminal rather than Church courts. Concern for the time local Church leaders could spend in their business interests led in part to the reduction of the size of stakes and the willingness to release longtime officers for reasons other than unfaithfulness or incapacity.

On November 19, 1918, the Church lost its sixth President. Seriously ill since mid-summer, Joseph F. Smith had been unable to fill all his responsibilities, and day-to-day supervision of Church affairs had fallen on first counselor Anthon H. Lund.²⁹

One might assume that the question of succession in the First Presidency had been settled in the minds of all by 1918, but that was not the case. In early July 1918, during President Smith's incapacity, Presiding Patriarch Hyrum G. Smith discussed his belief that by virtue of his patriarchal office he ought to become the presiding authority of the Church upon the death of Joseph F. Smith. On July 3, 1918, Joseph Fielding Smith, David O. McKay, and Heber J. Grant of the Twelve called on Presidents Lund and Charles W. Penrose. The three Apostles said that the Twelve differed with the presiding patriarch on the question of succession but that they did not want a controversy. To help settle the matter, they presented a letter that Wilford Woodruff had written on March 28, 1887.³⁰

The letter was extremely important because it had come into Grant's possession under similar circumstances. At the death of John Taylor, a controversy had surfaced over the reorganization of the First Presidency. Several Apostles discussed the matter with Wilford Woodruff, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve, and he wrote the letter to them, stating that in the absence of direct revelation from the Lord to the contrary, he believed that the president of the Quorum of the Twelve should become President of the Church. Presidents Lund and Penrose expressed pleasure at the letter but decided not to discuss the matter with Joseph F. Smith in view of his poor health.

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This letter seems to have resolved any doubt that others in the Twelve or the Presidency might have had at the time, and on November 21, 1918, the day before President Smith's funeral, the counselors in the First Presidency and the Twelve met together. No one occupied the presidency's chairs in the council room in the Temple, but the Apostles took their places according to seniority in the Twelve. The meeting was both a memorial for Joseph F. Smith and an expression of love and confidence in Heber J. Grant, whom all seemed to recognize as the next President.³¹ Following the meeting, Elder Grant met with Presidents Penrose and Lund to plan the Church's reorganization. He asked the two to continue to serve as his counselors and asked that Elder Lund, the senior Apostle, serve as President of the Twelve. On November 23, the Twelve reorganized the First Presidency and their own quorum.³²

Confirmation of President Grant's call followed. Because of the international flu pandemic, no general conference was held in October 1918 or in April 1919, but the Apostles called a general conference for June 1, 1919, to sustain the new presidency. In the meantime, in late May 1919 several people reported spiritual confirmations. President Lund reported that at a temple meeting on May 25, 1919, events took place similar to those reported at the meeting "held in Nauvoo when President Brigham Young was transfigured to look like Joseph Smith and the people took it as a sign that he was the true successor to the martyred prophet." Several people at the meeting said that at recent meetings Heber J. Grant had looked like Joseph F. Smith. Theodore Robinson said that at the fast meeting the preceding Sunday at the Granite Stake conference he was astonished that although Heber J. Grant was speaking, he looked exactly like Joseph F. Smith. Several others, including Brigham F. Grant and Edward H. Anderson, said the same thing.³³

The deaths of several long-established leaders, changes in the First Presidency, and calls to new positions led to changes in the Church hierarchy. President Lund, who had suffered for some time from a hemorrhaging duodenal ulcer, died of that disease on March 2, 1921. President Grant was in California at the time, and on March 5, on the way home to attend the

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funeral, he discussed possible counselors with Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley. Nibley said that everyone expected he would select his cousin Anthony W. Ivins. Grant remarked that if this were done “the Presidency would be strictly Democratic.” Bishop Nibley indicated that this would make no difference because Elder Ivins was the wisest man among the Apostles. After President Lund’s funeral on March 6, Grant spoke with President Penrose, who told him that Ivins was the only one he had thought of. President Grant said that his mind had rested on Ivins and that unless the Lord indicated someone else, he would undoubtedly select Ivins. On March 8, after a discussion with President Penrose, he decided to wait for the “impression of the Spirit” until April conference. On March 10, 1921, at a meeting of the first Presidency and the Twelve, he proposed that Charles W. Penrose become his first counselor and Anthony W. Ivins his second. Rudger Clawson became President of the Twelve, George F. Richards was called as Salt Lake Temple president, and the First Presidency and Twelve chose John A. Widtsoe to fill the vacancy in the Twelve.³⁴

President Penrose died on May 16, 1925, and that evening President Grant did not get to sleep until well after midnight as he prayed earnestly for guidance in the selection of a successor. By May 28 he felt impressed to call Anthony W. Ivins to fill President Penrose’s place and to select Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley as second counselor. He discussed possible replacements for Nibley with Reed Smoot on that day, and on June 4 proposed the call of Sylvester Q. Cannon, then city engineer of Salt Lake City.³⁵

Between 1918 and 1930, leaders continued making changes to Church administration. Church leaders recognized that they needed first to implement the separation of the Church’s estate from that of the President of the Church and of ecclesiastical and secular properties. This mixing of Church properties and finances with the President’s personal estate had caused some concern at the death of Lorenzo Snow as it had with the death of every previous president. Nevertheless, by 1930 the Church still had not separated policy making from administrative functions. In fact, administrative modernization was not completed until the 1970s, when the President of

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the Church withdrew from active involvement in Church-owned businesses and the Twelve ceased to administer Church departments.³⁶ In large part, the financial difficulties of the Church made administrative reform impossible. The First Presidency was constantly forced into taking an active part in routine matters such as negotiating loans and allocating funds for building construction. Still, in view of the difficulties the Church faced during this period, the accomplishments were significant.

Immediately after assuming the Presidency of the Church, Heber J. Grant began several measures of reorganization which were to have far-reaching effects on Church administration. On November 27, 1918, he announced that the First Presidency would relinquish the presidency of various auxiliary organizations. He intended, he said later, “to give all the auxiliary boards a full organization independent of the President of the Church, though, of course each [would be] under the direction of the General Authorities.” David O. McKay became the president of the Deseret Sunday School Union with Stephen L Richards and George Pyper as assistants. Anthony W. Ivins became general superintendent of the YMMIA with Brigham H. Roberts and Richard R. Lyman as assistants. President Joseph F. Smith had been general superintendent of both organizations. At the death of Anthon H. Lund, Joseph Fielding Smith became Church historian instead of vesting that job in the First Presidency. Some positions, however, the President of the Church retained. Heber J. Grant became president of the General Church Board of Education and retained the presidency of Church-related businesses such as the Utah National Bank, ZCMI, and U and I Sugar.³⁷

Previous difficulties, together with the increasing complexity of Church financial commitments, brought about the establishment of two legal entities to administer Church property. The First Presidency, the Presiding Bishopric, and Church legal advisers completed arrangements on February 7, 1922, for the creation of Zion Securities Corporation, which was to administer all taxable and nonecclesiastical property. Directors were Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, Stephen L Richards, Charles W. Nibley, and

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Arthur Winter. As a companion measure, on November 26, 1923, the Corporation of the President, a corporation sole, was organized to hold ecclesiastical property of the Church.³⁸

The first three decades of the twentieth century were extremely important in the development of Church policy on buildings, monuments, and historic sites.³⁹ Largely on the initiative of President Joseph F. Smith, the Church expanded its support of charitable and recreational facilities like hospitals and gymnasia, and it constructed buildings in downtown Salt Lake City to house administrative offices. Church leaders moved rather aggressively to acquire sites at which important occurrences in the early history of the Church had taken place, particularly in Vermont, western New York, and Illinois, and to erect monuments to people and events of the past.⁴⁰

Perhaps most important were the creative innovations of the period. The Church leadership moved from an ad hoc system in which varying contributions, usually ranging about 30 percent under Joseph F. Smith, were appropriated from general Church revenues for the construction of local meetinghouses and stake houses to a system under Heber J. Grant in which the Church contributed a standard amount—ordinarily 50 percent—of the cost of a building. The Church added to the four temples constructed in Utah by constructing new temples outside Utah at Laie, Hawaii; Cardston, Alberta, Canada; and Mesa, Arizona. The leadership acted vigorously to make certain that they used the best possible designs and decorations, invited competitive bidding among Mormon architectural firms—generally consisting of men with training in the best traditions of Europe and the United States—and hiring the best available Mormon artistic talent to paint and produce the murals, paintings, and other decorative features of the temples.⁴¹ In particular, two developments epitomize the administrative modernization of the Church and its response to the pluralization of the society around the Mormons—the construction of Deseret Gymnasium and the reorganization of the Church architect's office.

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As the Mutual Improvement Association expanded its physical education program, a number of general board members favored the construction of a gymnasium in Salt Lake City for young men. Some men had begun to frequent the YMCA gym, and many neglected Sunday services and drew away from the Church. To counteract this tendency, the General Authorities encouraged ward officers throughout the Church to see that ward buildings provided light gymnastic facilities to keep young men near their homes and “away from town influences.” By late February 1908, the First Presidency and Twelve approved the construction of Deseret Gymnasium in collaboration with Latter-day Saints University, a high school with some collegiate work in Salt Lake City. Completed in 1910, the facility received general Church funds for about a third of the cost and obtained the remainder in contributions from Church members in the Salt Lake area.⁴²

The Church also experimented with a system of standard plans for meetinghouses. In November 1919, the Church announced the appointment of Willard Young as superintendent of the Church Building Department. Perhaps in response to problems found in some buildings like the Blackfoot Tabernacle, which exhibited atrocious acoustics, Young began to standardize plans for buildings using colonial and neoclassical models. In April 1924, however, Joseph Nielson, who had served as architect for the science building at Brigham Young University and had designed the Beaver meetinghouse in 1918, called on President Grant to complain. He said that having an architectural department was not fair to local architects and that often the little work an architect could get locally made the difference between his success and failure. Several months later, after considering the situation, President Grant changed the policy and on August 27, 1924, notified architects that the officers of the various wards and stakes could hire local architects to design their buildings should they choose to do so.⁴³

In the twenties, principally because of depressed economic conditions, the First Presidency approved new buildings only reluctantly. During the financial crisis of 1920–21 and the Great Depression beginning in 1929, President Grant faced problems in meeting all the demands upon Church

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resources. In November 1921, the First Presidency wrote that the “finances of the Church here at home have not been at such a low ebb for ten or twelve years.” Conditions improved by August 1922, but by mid-1930 the Church had again fallen into severe financial difficulty. On June 9, President Grant had to tell the presidency of the Panguitch Stake that he could not appropriate money for a seminary building because he had not yet been able to fulfill promises for assistance made in 1929. He agreed, however, to try to help the stake get a loan to finance the construction. In late December 1930, the Church leadership announced a new policy of stopping the erection of “costly L.D.S. meeting houses.” By April 1931, the Church Auditing Committee reported that expenditures for Church buildings and other needs amounted to “much more” than its income. The First Presidency then resolved to curtail new construction even more.⁴⁴

Though most money seems to have gone toward capital improvements, full-time general authorities received a living allowance. Officers with outside business interests seem to have done well. Those like James E. Talmage and John A. Widtsoe, who had worked as educators and had few sources of outside income, had to rely upon the Church allowance to subsist and found themselves in constant financial difficulty. In July 1916, Talmage recorded preparations for a party at Joseph F. Smith’s home. “In preparation for this visit the brethren of the twelve were divided into two classes—the Haves and Haven’ts or the withs and withouts—one class comprising those who own autos and the other consisting of those who have no such means of conveyance. Members of the second class were assigned with their families to the care of their betters. Wife and I were conveyed to and from the Smith home by Brother and Sister Anthony W. Ivins in their splendid Packard Car.”⁴⁵

Widtsoe reported that his allowance as an Apostle was one-third his salary for the previous two decades while serving as a professor and president at two educational institutions. He had been forced to sell his car and discharge his servants. Some increases were made in the allowance in 1925, but it remained modest.⁴⁶

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An important development during the 1920s was the increasing expansion of the Church outside the Utah core area. In July 1922, the First Presidency called George W. McCune of Ogden to move to Los Angeles to become president of the newly created stake. By 1929, the Church had organized two stakes in the Los Angeles area, and the tremendous growth that had taken place in Los Angeles impressed Heber J. Grant.⁴⁷

In general, however, the Church leadership was not particularly happy with the out-migration of Mormons from Utah. Though exceptions existed, particularly in the case of other Mountain West states, the General Authorities expressed a general feeling of discomfort with the idea of dispersion.⁴⁸ In point of fact, the General Authorities had little dispersion to worry about by 1930. Most Church members still lived in the intermountain region, and a day's train ride from Salt Lake City followed by a short buggy or auto ride would take the General Authorities to most Mormons. General Authority visits to the Church's 1,000 wards had become less frequent, but one or more visited virtually every quarterly conference of the 104 stakes, most of which were in Utah, Arizona, and Idaho. Certainly the Church had grown in size and complexity since 1900, but it was still a relatively homogeneous intermountain organization of 672,000, more easily administered, in spite of its problems, than the diverse organization of today, with more members outside than inside the United States.

The evidence presented here would seem to indicate that while the modernization of the Church's relationship to politics and the business community had been largely accomplished by 1930, its organizational forms still remained in transition. The Church evidently accomplished its greatest success in ecclesiastical rather than managerial fields. The General Authorities had revitalized the priesthood quorums and set them on track to assume a greater portion of the burden for instruction and governance on the local level. The Church achieved signal achievements in the organization of Zion's Securities Corporation and the Corporation of the President, but trivial decisions, to which subordinates might more efficiently have attended, still burdened the First Presidency. The Church leadership had made

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some efforts to solve this problem, at least in connection with the funding for building construction, but the financial stringencies of the period made the proposed solutions impossible to completely implement.

NOTES

1. For a general discussion of the Church's debt in the 1880s and 1890s, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 400–403; see also Ronald W. Walker, "Crisis in Zion: Heber J. Grant and the Panic of 1893," *Arizona and the West* 21 (Autumn 1979): 257–78.
2. Heber J. Grant, diary (hereafter cited as Grant, diary), January 4 and August 8, 1898, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter CHL); Brigham Young Jr., journal (hereafter cited as Young, journal), July 12, 1898, CHL.
3. Young, journal, July 14, 1900; Anthon H. Lund, journal (hereafter cited as Lund, journal), September 6, 1900, CHL; Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 403–9.
4. Young, journal, July 2, 1899; Marriner W. Merrill, journal (hereafter cited as Merrill, journal), July 2, 1899, LDS Archives; John Henry Smith, journal (hereafter cited as J. H. Smith, journal), July 2, 1899, Smith Family Papers, Western Americana Collection, University of Utah Library.
5. Young, journal, April 12, May 6, 1900; Lund, journal, June 26, 1900.
6. Young, journal, December 21, October 13, 1898.
7. Grant, diary, January 5, 1899; Lund, journal, December 5, 1901; Joseph F. Smith to Nancy L. Richards, July 19, 1901, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks, CHL; J. H. Smith, journal, December 12, 1901.
8. Lund, journal, January 13, 1908, October 12, 1913, and passim; Presiding Bishop, Annual Reports, 1903, 1908, 1909, CHL (hereafter PBO Report); Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, photocopy, CHL, May 1910.
9. Grant, diary, December 4, 11, 1907; Lund, journal, December 4, 11, 1907; Joseph F. Smith to Charles W. Penrose, December 12, 1907, Joseph F. Smith Letterbooks.
10. Charles W. Nibley, "Reminiscences of Charles W. Nibley" MS, CHL, 81, 83.

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11. Anthony W. Ivins, journal, April 8, 1901, Ivins Family Papers, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City (hereafter USHS); James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 4:34, 46.
12. First Presidency, circular letter, January 1, 1910, Clark, *Messages*, 4:213–14.
13. Circular letter, September 12, 1901, cited in Clark, *Messages*, 3:341; Lund, journal, January 22, 1904.
14. PBO Report, 1903, 1908, 1909. For a discussion of the change in this basic orientation, see Jan Shippy, “In the Presence of the Past: Continuity and Change in Twentieth Century Mormonism” in *After 150 Years: The Latter-day Saints in Sesquicentennial Perspective*, ed. Thomas G. Alexander and Jessie L. Embry (Midvale, UT: Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, 1985), 3–35.
15. First Council of the Seventy Minutes (hereafter FCS Minutes) March 14, October 10, and passim, 1900; December 4, 1901, CHL; Lund, journal, December 1, 1901.
16. FCS Minutes, October 1, 15, 1902. For a discussion of the later manifestations of this movement, see William G. Hartley, “The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908–1922,” *BYU Studies* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1973): 137–56. From the currently available evidence on the work of the seventies, it is clear that Hartley dates the origins of this movement too late.
17. FCS Minutes, September 30, 1903.
18. George F. Richards, journal, January 30, May 31, 1907, CHL; First Presidency, circular letter, June 12, 1907, in Clark, *Messages*, 4:157–59.
19. *Improvement Era*, December 1907, 147–50, and September 1908, 893–94; Grant, diary, June 10, 1908.
20. Grant, diary, December 17, 1908; Richards, journal, December 2, 22, 23, 1908.
21. William G. Hartley, “The Priesthood Reorganization of 1877: Brigham Young’s Last Achievement,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 3–36; Lund, journal, August 9, 1906, October 6, 1903; Richards, journal, July 15, 1906; see also D. Michael Quinn, “The Evolution of the Presiding Quorums of the LDS Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 1 (1974): 21–37.
22. Ivins, journal, October 8, 1906.
23. First Presidency to First Council of the Seventy, October 26, 1907, and idem, circular letter, November 6, 1907, in Clark, *Messages*, 4:159–62.

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24. Richards, journal, December 26, 1908; Grant, diary, November 30, 1908; J. H. Smith, journal, December 3, 1908; *Journal History*, November 29, 1908.
25. *Improvement Era*, March 1909, 397, April 1909, 498, and July 1909, 749; Grant, diary, March 20, 1909.
26. Richards, journal, May 27, 1911, March 5, 1913; Lund, journal, June 10, 1913.
27. Lund, journal, August 13, 1913.
28. *Improvement Era*, November 1913, 61, and September 1915, 1024.
29. Lund, journal, November 17, 8, 19, 22, 1918.
30. The following is based on Grant, diary, July 3, 1918.
31. Lund, journal, November 21, 1918.
32. Lund, journal, November 23, 1918.
33. Lund, journal, May 25, June 1, 1919; *Journal History*, June 1, 1919.
34. Grant, diary, March 5, 6, 8, 10, 17, 1921; Richards, journal, March 10, 14, 1921.
35. Grant, diary, May 16, 1925; Reed Smoot, diary, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, June 4, 1925 (hereafter Smoot, diary).
36. Talmage, journal, January 7, 1918; Lund, journal, November 27, 1918, January 13, 1919.
37. Lund, journal, November 27, December 29, 1918.
38. Grant, diary, January 28, 1919, April 25, September 20, 21, 1921, January 31, February 7, 1922; Smoot, diary, April 10, 1919; *Journal History*, February 8, 1922, November 26, 1923.
39. On the importance of Church sites, see Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 109–37.
40. On the acquisition of sites, see B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Century I* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1930), 6:319, 426–30, 525–26; James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 453, 511.
41. On architectural development, see Allen D. Roberts, “Religious Architecture of the LDS Church: Influences and Changes Since 1847,” *Utah Historical Quarterly*

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- 43 (Summer 1975): 321–27; Peter L. Goss, “The Architectural History of Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Summer 1975): 223–39; and Paul L. Anderson, “The Early Twentieth Century Temples,” *Dialogue* 14 (Spring 1981): 9–19. The statistical information on the amounts appropriated by the Church comes from Lund, journal, and Grant, diary.
42. Grant, diary, February 26, March 15, 25, 31, June 9, 1908; Lund, journal, April 25, 1912; First Presidency to Nephi L. Morris, October 31, 1910, cited in Clark, *Messages*, 4:218–19; *Journal History*, February 27, 1908.
43. On the development of standard plans, see Martha Sonntag Bradley, “The Church and Colonel Saunders’: Mormon Standard Plan Architecture” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 31–50; see also Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 509–10; Grant, diary, April 18, August 27, 1924.
44. First Presidency to Serge Ballif, November 19, 1921; and Heber J. Grant to Reed Smoot, August 26, 1922; Grant, diary, June 9, 1930, April 3, 1931; *Journal History*, December 29, 1930.
45. Talmage, journal, July 13, 1916.
46. Grant, diary, December 19, 1919, January 20, 1921, June 1, 9, 1921; Smoot, diary, September 21, 1918, December 25, 1919; D. Michael Quinn, “The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: An American Elite” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1976), 127–30; Talmage, journal, July 13, 1916; Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land*, 161; Richards, journal, January 30, 1925.
47. Grant, diary, July 13, August 14, 1922, February 24, 1929.
48. Heber J. Grant to Nephi L. Morris, May 8, 1922; *Journal History*, February 3, April 25, 1923, May 26, 1930; Grant, diary, April 14, 1923, July 20, November 27, July 20, 1929.