

A WORLD IN TRANSFORMATION¹

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In a recent informative and thoughtful book, George Bush, the elder, and Brent Scowcroft, his National Security Advisor, speak of a world transformed (*A World Transformed*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1998). They describe some of the most dramatic and epochal events of the 20th Century, events which can be grouped broadly under the umbrella of the conclusion of the last great confrontation of the century, the Cold War. In only a few years, the world has witnessed the end of the Cold War, upheaval in China, reunification of Germany, Desert Storm, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the U.S. as the pre-eminent power in the world, the only true super-power.

Another transformation is changing our world. A new international system, that of globalization, is replacing the Cold War. Unlike the Cold War system, which froze the world into static competing blocks for nearly half a century, globalization is a dynamic ongoing process. Globalization involves the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before, in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations and countries to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before, and in a way that is

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producing a powerful backlash against those who are being left behind or brutalized by this new system.

The democratization of technology which characterizes globalization weaves the world together tighter than ever before. Developing countries—thanks to microchips, satellites, fiber optics, miniaturization and the Internet—no longer just have to trade their raw materials to the West and get finished products in return. Developing countries now can and are becoming big-time producers as well. Companies now can locate different parts of their production, research and marketing components in different countries, and tie them all together through teleconferencing and computers. All of this can be done at prices far lower than ever dreamed of a few years ago. For example, according to *The Economist*, a three-minute call, between New York and London cost \$300 in 1930, calculated in 1996 dollars. Today it is almost free through the Internet.

This integration of activities applies not only to companies and nation-states, but also to individuals. In his book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, 1999), Thomas L. Friedman tells the story of his mother, who lives in Minneapolis and called him recently, upset. “What’s wrong, Mom?” he said. “Well,” she replied, “I’ve been playing bridge on the Internet with three Frenchmen and they keep speaking French to each other and I can’t understand them.” Friedman chuckled, and his mother took a little umbrage. “Don’t laugh,” she said, “I was playing bridge with someone in Siberia the other day.” Wow! When a

woman in Minneapolis plays bridge with a man in Siberia, isn't the world becoming, in many ways, a global village?

But globalization is not all smiles and sunshine. It has a number of potentially disastrous down sides as well. When the infection of financial panic spreads in a globalized world—and it can do so literally overnight—it causes ripples—even tidal waves across the whole global system.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that the world is becoming, in effect, smaller, more integrated and more interrelated. It seems almost certain this trend will continue: indeed it seems irreversible. Each of us, including ecclesiastical leaders, business and public managers, academics, and everyone else, from top to bottom and side to side, has to learn to deal with the increasingly complex economic, social and environmental problems in the non-linear system which represents the world around us.

If you still think I'm being overly dramatic and that the world really hasn't changed all that much; if you still need to be convinced that the old and the new are mixed together as never before, I remind you of the following news clipping taken from the *Deseret News* of 23 January 2000:

"Turkey - Ankara - Two brothers escaped after a pack of wolves surrounded them in Turkey by climbing a telegraph pole and using a cell phone to call for help."

In his book already mentioned, Thomas Friedman quotes Paul Kennedy and John Lewis Gaddis, renowned historians at Yale, about the need for foreign relations strategists to better understand the complexities of the world around us. Speaking of people who are subject matter experts alone, the two historians make the following comment:

“These people are perfectly competent at taking in parts of the picture, but they have difficulty seeing the entire thing. They pigeonhole priorities, pursuing them separately and simultaneously, with little thought to how each might undercut the other. They proceed confidently enough from tree to tree, but seem astonished to find themselves lost in the forest. The great strategists of the past kept forests as well as the trees in view. They were generalists, and they operated from an ecological perspective. They understood that the world is a web, in which adjustments made here are bound to have effects over there— that everything is interconnected. Where, though, might one find generalists today?...The dominant trend within universities and the think tanks is toward ever-narrower specialization: a higher premium is placed on functioning deeply within a single field than broadly across several. And yet without some awareness of the whole—without some sense of how means converge to accomplish or to frustrate ends—there can be no strategy. And without strategy, there is only drift.”

Though these comments were directed at foreign relations strategists, I suggest to you they apply much more broadly, to include all who work in a globalized world and are required to make decisions which fall outside of a narrow field of technical expertise. Make no mistake; we desperately need subject-matter specialists, but we also need those who

can take a broader view of the world around us, and attempt to make sense of its immense inter-related complexities. Those who make and carry out public policy have a particularly urgent need to understand that everything in society is interconnected. They must learn to think and act holistically. In fields as diverse as economic policy, health care, or foreign trade, alteration or adjustment of any component part has effects elsewhere.

I freely admit that this brave new world of globalization is filled with uncertainties and replete with dangers. The unprecedented revolutionary transformations going on around us are leading us into uncharted waters which will, in my view, require more than human intelligence if we are to navigate our way in safety. Technology so dazzling and relentless that it may well exceed the capacity of the human species to understand its implications and adapt to its consequences will have immense impact on our perceptions of humanity's uniqueness. None of us can fully comprehend the moral and ethical implications of such "advances" as the mapping of the human genome; transplant organs from bioengineered animal species; chemical therapies custom-designed to correct deficiencies in the genomes of patients; artificially enhanced domestic animals; genetically altered plant species; or computing devices which equal or exceed some attributes of the human mind.

The profound uncertainties introduced by these and many other technological changes will themselves be influenced by such diverse

factors as the escalating erosion of the standards, norms and mores which have provided anchor points for the human race since time immemorial; frenetic lifestyles which separate humans from the rhythms of nature; worldwide climatic change; marked increases in world population; growing pressures on food, energy and water supplies, a “geezer” boom as life expectancy increases to nearly 100 years in developed countries, and a division of humanity into the relatively few techno-elites who understand and utilize advanced technology, and the much larger numbers of those who are tyrannized and held in thrall by it.

We begin to understand the interconnectedness of all peoples everywhere as we internalize the Apostle Paul’s famous statement to the Athenians: “(God) hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). The implications of Paul’s prescient observation are clear: all men and women everywhere literally are brothers and sisters, members of the same spiritual family, with all of the obligations and responsibilities of sibling relationships that implies. The inter-necine warfare which continues to tear apart human communities in so many places around the globe is an affront to God and a denial of our familial relationships with all of the rest of God’s children. If we value the future, prejudice, bigotry and racism, all of which have caused so much suffering and harm in our time, must be replaced with the brotherhood of which Jesus and every other great religious leader in history taught.

We reaffirm our familial relationships with others as we join in loving, serving, and suffering together. As we do so we find that the superficial differences which have kept us apart fall away and we see each other not as stereotypes or caricatures, but as real people, not much different than we are ourselves.

One aspect of life upon which most of us can agree relates to our children, and by extension, to all children everywhere. On a global basis, children bear more than their share of trouble and travail. About 140 million children, worldwide, do not go to primary school, but labor at home, in the fields, in sweatshops, or in the streets. More than half of those are girls. Each day, in the developing world, more than 30,000 children die from preventable diseases, such as diarrhea, respiratory infections or malaria. Malnutrition—which affects more than 200 million children worldwide—is associated with more than half of the deaths of the 30,000 children who die each day from preventable diseases. America, the wealthiest land in the history of the world, ranks only 16th in living standards for our poorest children; every 32 seconds a baby in the United States is born into poverty, and three children die of abuse or neglect daily in this country.

The tears and sorrow of children touch every heart, and we long to reach out to comfort them, dry their tears and give them hope for the future. Perhaps nowhere in the world are children in greater peril than in Africa, where an AIDS epidemic of medieval proportions is leaving a whole

generation of children without parents. Some 12 million African children already have been left as orphans, innocent victims of the AIDS epidemic. Some 6,000 African children are dying with AIDS daily. Millions of people are being infected each year with the HIV virus; nearly all will die from AIDS. Through 1999, 450,000 people in North America had died from AIDS, but in sub-Saharan Africa the figure was 13,700,000. The percent of adults ages 15-49 already infected with the AIDS virus is as high as 30% in several African countries—more than 100 times the rate in the U.S. Half of South African boys aged 15 will not live to age 30. Uganda has the dubious honor of having the highest number of AIDS orphans in the world—1.1 million in all; in some districts in Uganda, one-third of all children are orphans. Destitute orphans, most of whom end up in the streets, turn to prostitution or violence. None among us can be oblivious to or unconcerned about this terrible tragedy as AIDS tightens its death grip on a whole continent. None of us fully understands why God allows such tragedies to occur. Certainly He weeps over the sorrows and foolishness of His children. How wise is the prophetic counsel that children have the right to goodly parents, who care for and love them, protect them and raise them up “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8).

Against that background—and I admit that it is both exciting and somber in its implications—what challenges will The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and its members, face in this new century in which we find ourselves? Before briefly discussing them, let me state several

important caveats. First, it is wise to avoid being too dogmatic and sure of oneself in making predictions about the future. No one knows for certain what tomorrow may bring. History, as Winston Churchill said, “unfolds itself by strange and unpredictable paths. We have little control over the future, and none at all over the past” (James C. Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill*, Harper Collins, New York, 1994, p. 4). Our ability to predict the future is, of course, inversely related to the time frame involved. What will happen next week or even next year is much easier to predict than events ten years downstream. The further we depart from today, the deeper the fog through which we try to peer.

Secondly, the comments and conclusions I make today are my own. I do not speak on behalf of or on assignment from the Brethren. My views do not represent the official position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor of its most senior leaders, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. Faults, errors and omissions are mine alone, and I take full and sole responsibility for them. I pray the indulgence and forgiveness of those wiser than I, who discern my errors of commission, or even worse, detect matters of great importance for the future which I have failed to identify or examine appropriately.

Additionally, let us never forget that the future of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not lie in the hands of mortal men, either good or bad. This church bears the sacred name of the Only Begotten Son of the Father. It is Christ’s Church, and we can safely leave

its future in His care and keeping. All that is required of us—and of all people everywhere—is that we do our best, each at his post, each in her station. Of one thing we can be certain: this Church will not fail. The power and authority of God will never again be taken from the earth. The Church will grow according to God’s will and divine timetable over the ensuing years; it will “come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners” (D & C 109:73).

Now, let us at least touch, in a rough and ready way, upon some of the challenges and opportunities the Church will face over the next century. The first relates to the communications revolution, already mentioned, and currently underway around the globe. Technology is, in and of itself, morally neutral, and its uses always have been as diverse as human motivations. But the revolutionary and transforming communications technology of today exceeds that of earlier times not only in its power—there are, for example, estimated to be many thousands of new Internet web-pages added weekly to a current base of scores of millions—but also in the nature of the technology itself, which permits a near total anonymity on the part of the user. Though Molière averred (*Le Tartuffe*, 1664) that “ce n’est pas pécher que pécher en silence” (“to sin in secret is not to sin at all”), sin conducted in private with the aid of the Internet, for example, is not only real, but made much easier both to commit and to conceal by the means of its commission. As never before,

people of all ages, if they are to refrain from sin, must do so not because of external restraints but because of internal convictions.

Another great challenge is our continuing struggle to bring the Church up “out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (D & C 1:30).

Are we still, in our day, as misunderstood, maligned and misquoted as we were a century ago? The answer is both “yes,” and “no.” We are still criticized by some to be sure, but in general we are better treated by others than we were a century ago. President Gordon B. Hinckley, in his report at the April, 1999, general conference, put it in perspective: “I am pleased to report that the Church is better known and better understood. Generally the media have been kind to us. They have dealt honestly with us. There are exceptions, of course, and this we regret. The old images of the past continue to be dragged forth by those who deal in sensationalism and exploitation. Meanwhile the Church goes forward in its appointed mission in the direction of its appointed destiny. We will work together with patience, never losing sight of the great mission given us by Him who is our leader and whose Church this is” (CR, April, 1999, p. 4).

One of the most effective ways to bring the Church up out of obscurity is to spread the restoration message through our missionary efforts around the world. A century ago, in 1901, when Joseph F. Smith became president of the Church, our worldwide membership, almost all of

whom dwelt in the American inter-mountain West, was just over 283,000. There were members in 21 missions in 18 countries. In 1902, 848 missionaries were called; 300 per 100,000 members. In 2000, with more than 11 million members worldwide, the Church had wards and branches in 333 missions, and operated in 166 countries. Over 34,000 missionaries were called to serve in 1999, amounting to 317 per 100,000 members. Our missionary zeal has not flagged over the last 100 years. It remains strong. Its force derives from our spiritual duty to witness of Jesus Christ and His gospel. That obligation is placed upon us by Christ Himself. His disciples are required to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Other Christian churches largely have lost their desire to do missionary work. In 1996, for example, the American Episcopal Church, one of the venerable "seven sisters" of American Protestantism, sponsored just 25 overseas missionaries worldwide (Thomas C. Reeves, *The Empty Church: Does Organized Religion Matter Anymore?* Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 1996).

Though there are several hundreds of thousands of converts to the Church each year, our great missionary responsibility continues unabated. The gospel message has not yet been preached in many parts of the world, and even in America the Church is still not well known by millions. We estimate that over half of the world's current population has not as yet had any opportunity to hear the gospel message. Though the responsibility to preach the gospel weighs as heavily on us in our day as it

did on our leaders a century ago, we now have access to technology which they could not even dream about.

The major proselyting tool of a century ago, tracting, increasingly is being supplemented by technological procedures to spread the gospel message. One of our major challenges is to learn how to use technology fully and effectively to assist us in this aspect of our divine mission.

Management of World-Wide Growth

With convert baptisms each year numbering in the hundreds of thousands, and growth rates of at least 40% per decade maintained over the last century (see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of a New World Faith*, in *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research in the LDS Church and Its Members*, James T. Duke, ed., Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1998, pp. 9-27), perhaps the greatest challenge and opportunity the Church will have in the 21st Century will be management of our worldwide growth. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is already among the top ten religious bodies in the United States, and continues to grow in this country while many "main-line" Christian denominations are experiencing a decrease in their numbers. Reeves, (loc. cit.), has noted, for example, that the Methodist Church in the United States has lost 1,000 members every week on average for the last 30 plus years.

Growth of the Church in the United States and Canada during the decade of the 1990's averaged 2.1% annually. During the same time

frame our foreign congregations grew by 5.5% annually. Growth rates in Latin America have been particularly high in recent years. In Brazil, for example, where there were fewer than 3,700 members in 1959, there are now nearly 800,000 members; growth rates in Brazil during the 1990's exceeded 8.4% annually.

During the next 20 years, if current rates of growth continue, we will have to call and train approximately 2,500 additional stake presidents, and replace the 2,500 currently serving at least twice. During that same time period, 15,000 new bishops, in addition to those currently serving, will need to be called and trained. The current corpus of serving bishops will be replaced at least four times during the next 20 years. Add to those numbers the new and replacement Relief Society and Elders Quorum Presidents and other stake and ward leaders, and it is certain that our task of finding and training new and replacement leadership will be a daunting one. It must also be noted that the vast majority of the Church over the next 20 years will be first-generation members, with much less leadership and administrative experience than those who have been raised "in the Church" all their lives. In accomplishing the Herculean task of calling, training and re-training leaders we will no doubt wish to make wise use of new technology as well as more traditional training procedures.

Maintaining a Lay Priesthood: Avoiding a Paid Ministry

One of our great strengths, as others have noted, (e.g., Rodney Stark, *ibid.*, p. 54-55), lies in our lay priesthood. Each local unit, be it a

branch, ward, district or stake, is led by a lay leader who like Paul of old earns his own living in a secular occupation. Since local ecclesiastical positions almost invariably require financial sacrifice on the part of the incumbents, Latter-day Saint clergy clearly are not motivated by a desire for a secure living. Though almost all clergy in other churches obviously have much more formal theological training than do most Latter-day Saint bishops, for example, the relevancy of much of that training to the real day-to-day problems of ordinary people, and to the challenges involved in organizing and managing complex human communities, must seriously be questioned.

As the Church continues to grow worldwide, the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of our members will increase. We already have more members outside of the U.S. and Canada than inside, and that disparity will only increase over the next century. A century ago, Church members were remarkably homogeneous in terms of their ethnic and geographic background. Most were of Northern European stock and spoke English or a Northern European language as their mother tongue. Only a relative few spoke Spanish as their mother tongue, in contrast to today, when approximately 30% of Church members count Spanish as their preferred language. If current trends continue, our projections suggest that by the year 2017 more Church members will speak Spanish than English as their mother tongue.

In response to our worldwide growth, we have witnessed, particularly during President Gordon B. Hinckley's inspired leadership, a miraculous era of temple building. President Joseph F. Smith, who presided over the Church in the early years of the 20th century, witnessed the groundbreaking for the first two temples built in this dispensation outside of the continental United States, in Alberta and Hawaii, though he did not live to see the dedication of either. In contrast to the four operating temples in 1918, the last year of President Smith's life, there are now 103 operating temples in the Church, located in 32 countries, with an additional 18 announced.

Maintaining the Purity of Doctrines and Practices

No responsibility rests more heavily upon the First Presidency and Twelve than the need to maintain the purity of our doctrines and practices. They doubtless have ever in their minds the words of the Lord given to the prophet Joseph Smith in November, 1831, describing conditions in the world around the time the gospel was restored: "For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world..." (D & C 1:15-16).

Our need to maintain the purity of the doctrines and practices will engage much of the attention of the senior Church leadership in the 21st Century. Sadly, we live in a post-Christian world, where increasingly the only sin is that of so-called "intolerance"; a time when men call "evil good

and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20), on a scale unprecedented at least since the restoration and perhaps in all of Christian history. Increasingly, all Western societies, including that in the United States, are at best only nominally Christian; the disparity between what many Christians believe and the "official" teachings of their churches grows ever larger; and levels of Christian practice are shrinking in all lands.

Given the continuation of current trends towards secularization in a post-Christian world, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will, I fear, increasingly stand with only a few others against the advances of evil. While we can and will make common cause with other good people on specific moral issues, there are things we cannot do and causes we cannot espouse because our doctrine and our dependence on the Spirit prohibits us doing so. The doctrinal ecumenicism of the world is not for us, and never can be. The Church during the 21st Century will continue to "stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" (D & C 78:14). Part of that independence will be a zealous maintenance of separation between the Church and the state,"rendering unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's" (Luke 20:25).

We should not be afraid to stand alone. After all, "they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

Finally, an important component of managing our worldwide growth in the 21st Century involves the need to avoid intellectual apostasy among our members, perhaps particularly among those who are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). Of such, Peter said they are “wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (2 Peter 2:17).

Protect the Family

The Church's divine responsibility to preserve, protect and defend the family will not slacken or falter during the 21st Century. It cannot: our doctrine requires that we safeguard this sacred institution against enemies and conditions that weaken and undermine it. The family in America and many other lands is under continuous and determined attack. It is not only changing under the pressures, but becoming weaker. Two notable trends of the past generation—the rapid increase in divorce rates and in out-of-wedlock childbearing, are particularly indicative of the weakened state of the family. Other danger signs include a decrease in the two-parent family as the traditional setting in which most children are raised; a decrease of the influence of the extended family; the documented impact of fatherlessness on a multitude of social problems ranging from crime to domestic violence against women; increased numbers of “latch-key” children, both of whose parents work outside of the home; competitive demands from a variety of community and school activities, which weaken family cohesiveness; and aggressive, well-financed attempts to legitimize

so-called same-sex unions, according to them all of the rights, powers and privileges which have since time immemorial been restricted to marriage between a man and a woman.

I think it not unlikely that in the coming years The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will at times stand alone against those who would denigrate, weaken, and eventually destroy the family. If that becomes necessary, so be it. Our resolve will not flag or falter. We have stood alone before and will do so again if required to do so. The Church will make whatever sacrifices are demanded, and pay whatever price is required in pursuance of our sacred duty to protect the family.

In its majestic, inspired Proclamation to the World in September, 1995, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve affirmed the position on the family of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Proclamation is fully in accord with the teachings of each and all of the prophets of this dispensation, as well as those of earlier ages. I expect it will stand throughout the 21st Century as the definitive statement on the position of the Church on this most important subject.

I end where I began: the 21st Century will be replete with challenges and opportunities for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Though the numbers of Church members will continue to grow, they will still be "few" in comparison to the world's population (see 1 Nephi 14:12). There will be more stakes and more missions until all nations shall hear the

gospel as a witness before the Savior comes (see JS-M 1:31). Temples will dot the land. The power of God will be sustained (see 1 Nephi 14:14). Amidst the great evil which will stand in opposition to the Lord's kingdom, He has given this assurance: "the righteous need not fear" (1 Nephi 22:17,22). Secure in our knowledge that we are engaged in God's work, anchored in our testimonies in the strength of this great latter-day work, secure in our faith in God and His prophets, we can face the century with equanimity and optimism, doing our duty as God has revealed it to us, and entrusting the future to Him whose servants we all are.

Testimony

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.