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Abstract Review of *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration* (2006), by Tad R. Callister; and *Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy* (2005), by Alexander B. Morrison.

Turning Away

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Review of Tad R. Callister. *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006. xiv + 484 pp., with appendixes and index. $23.95.

Review of Alexander B. Morrison. *Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005. x + 191 pp., with appendix, bibliography, and index. $19.95.

From the time of Joseph Smith's first vision, the concepts of general apostasy and divine restoration have been central to the Latter-day Saint movement. In the Prophet's account of his vision, he records that after he asked which church he should join, "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof'" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). Later, through visitations from the angel Moroni and through the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith's role in the promised restoration became clear.

Although the idea of a falling away from the teachings of Christ in the early days of the Christian church has been taught in Protestant congregations for centuries, in no other church is it as absolutely vital as it is to the existence of the Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints. Only through a general apostasy, with all of the ramifications—the loss of priesthood authority, the end of prophecy and revelation, and the alteration or suppression of vital ordinances and doctrines—would a restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith be necessary. The origin of the church rests on the idea that the true gospel of Jesus Christ needed to be returned to the earth, not through reform of existing doctrines, but through a total restoration given through divine revelation.

Given its importance in the doctrine of the church, the idea of the general apostasy (or the great apostasy) has been studied by many of the leading Latter-day Saint scholars through the years.[1] In 2005 and 2006, four books were published on the apostasy by Latter-day Saint authors: *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy,* edited by Noel B. Reynolds; *Where Have All the Prophets Gone?* by Scott R. Petersen; *Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy,* by Alexander B. Morrison; and *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration,* by Tad R. Callister. Each of the four books deals generally with the same events: the Old Testament and New Testament prophecies of the apostasy; the deaths of the apostles and the formation of the early Christian church; the loss of doctrines, authority, and ordinances; the long Dark Ages; and the restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Each of the books, however, takes a different approach to the central events of the apostasy and restoration. Alison Coutts reviews the books by Reynolds and Petersen, and I review the books by Morrison and Callister.

Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy

Of the four recent books on the apostasy, Alexander B. Morrison's *Turning from Truth: A New Look at the Great Apostasy* is clearly the

1. For detailed treatments of Latter-day Saint studies of the apostasy, see Eric R. Dursteler, "Inheriting the 'Great Apostasy': The Evolution of Latter-day Saint Views on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," in *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy,* ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Press, 2005), 29–65, and Ryan G. Christensen's appendix, "Bibliographical Note on Latter-day Saint Writings on the Apostasy," in the same volume, 371–85.

most accessible overview of Latter-day Saint teachings on the topic. Morrison, an emeritus member of the church's First Quorum of the Seventy and a well-respected author of several books, has an eloquent, yet simple, writing style that draws the reader into his analysis of the events of the apostasy and restoration. He combines the traditional Latter-day Saint teachings on the apostasy with the latest research on the topic to provide a seamless picture of one of the foundational doctrines of the church.

In his introduction, Morrison reviews the importance of the apostasy in Latter-day Saint thought. He also reviews traditional approaches to the apostasy, which generally used the so-called Dark Ages as evidence of the absence of the truth, and compares those approaches to more modern efforts to examine the causes and effects of the Christian apostasy. He also clarifies that in Latter-day Saint thought, although the great apostasy is central to Joseph Smith's restoration, the process is part of an ongoing dispensational cycle of apostasy and restoration, not only for the general church but also for each individual. Morrison writes, "Although the subject of this book deals with the general apostasy of the early church soon after Jesus' death and resurrection, these words of advice from wise priesthood bearers are worthy of note. Institutional apostasy *always* starts with *individual* apostasy" (p. 13).

Morrison then takes a chronological approach to the apostasy, beginning with the context and social setting of the early Christians and proceeding through the process of turning away from the true church of Christ. He examines the most important reasons for the apostasy, including the loss of priesthood authority, corruption of the scriptures, persecution and martyrdom, the councils and creeds of the early church, and later corruptions and heresies. Although his is the shortest of the four recently published books on the apostasy, Morrison does not give a superficial treatment of these topics. His book, however, is an overview intended for the general Latter-day Saint reader and is not an in-depth scholarly analysis.

The book concludes with a list of nine facts that Morrison believes are the most important ideas to take from a study of the apostasy:

1. An institutional apostasy occurred. (p. 163)
2. We do not have many of the details of what happened to the early church and probably never will know them. (p. 164)
3. The damage was done early. (p. 165)
4. Much of the damage resulted from mutiny, from internal dissent and contention. (p. 165)
5. Persecution played a role. (p. 165)
6. Something must have gone terribly wrong with the procedure for transferring divine power and authority. (p. 166)
7. Though institutional apostasy will not occur again, as we have been promised, individual apostasy remains as easy as ever. (p. 168)
8. The victors write the histories. (p. 171)
9. The heavens have again been opened. (p. 171)

Although he does not include a chapter on the restoration, Morrison provides additional insights, context, and evidence from the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the statements and writings of modern prophets and apostles throughout the book. These restoration sources, combined with many references to early Christian writings and academic studies, reinforce the central theme of the book, that the restoration and the apostasy are inextricably linked, both in prophecy and in history. In God's plan, neither the apostasy nor the restoration could exist without the other.

Morrison's *Turning from Truth* is an excellent book for any person seeking an introduction to the principles of apostasy and restoration.

The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration

> Not all questions are of equal import. Some are amusing; some lead to the discovery of trivial insights; others open doors to significant discoveries in fields such as science, history, and music; and yet others are of such a deep and soul-searching nature that, if explored, they not only inform us, but they change us. One such question has been asked with recurring frequency in modern Christianity: "What happened to

> Christ's Church?" The purpose of this book is to assist those who earnestly seek an answer to that inquiry.[2]

So Tad R. Callister begins the introduction to his volume on the apostasy and the restoration, *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration.* The question of what happened to Christ's church is central to any discussion of the apostasy, as has been mentioned in this essay and in the other three books on the apostasy being reviewed. In his book, Callister approaches the apostasy in much the same way as Alexander Morrison: that the falling away of the early church of Christ was an inevitable step toward the restoration and the final dispensation.

Callister's book, the longest of the four books, goes into great detail on each of the arguments for the apostasy and restoration. He has obviously worked through a great amount of literature to bring together some of the best Latter-day Saint, early Christian, and Protestant writings on the events of the apostasy. His strength lies in compiling the information and presenting it in a form that is accessible to the lay reader. That strength, however, also leads to the book's greatest weakness. With several other works on the apostasy available, including the other three reviewed in this number of the *FARMS Review,* as well as older treatments by Hugh Nibley, Bruce R. McConkie, Joseph Fielding Smith, B. H. Roberts, and James E. Talmage, Callister's book pales in comparison, both in the scope and depth of the research and in the accessibility of the book as a whole.

That is not to say, however, that Callister's book is not an important addition to the library of works on the apostasy. A person who approaches this book to learn for the first time about the early church, its falling away, and the restoration will find all the essential details and will come away enlightened and informed. For those who have read some of the other books on the topic, however, the information, quotations, and arguments in the book will sound familiar, albeit presented in Callister's engaging style.

2. Tad R. Callister, *The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), xi.

Callister begins his book with a brief discussion of the early Christian church, with its organization, practices, and divinely inspired leadership. This is followed by an equally brief overview of the two most commonly cited causes of the apostasy: external persecution and internal dissension and unrighteousness. Although these first chapters are short, they provide the basis for the bulk of the book, and their themes are repeated throughout.

With the foundation in place, Callister turns to his main argument: that the history of Christianity is rife with evidences of the apostasy (see pp. 56–57). Although he breaks each point into several subpoints, Callister defines thirteen evidences of the apostasy:

1. The loss of the apostles and revelation
2. The testimony of the scriptures
3. The Bible ends
4. The loss of miracles and gifts of the spirit
5. The Dark Ages
6. Many teachings were perverted, others lost, and new ones invented
7. Many ordinances were perverted, others lost, and new ones invented
8. The mode of prayer was changed
9. The scriptures were removed from the lay members
10. Wickedness within the church hierarchy
11. The decline of moral standards and loss of church discipline
12. The ongoing church no longer bore Christ's name
13. The priesthood was lost

Each piece of evidence is then given its own chapter (chapters 9–21 respectively), wherein Callister examines the differences among the scriptures, the early Christian church, medieval and modern Christianity, and modern revelation in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His discussion is especially helpful in the chapters on the sixth and seventh evidences (how teachings and ordinances were perverted, lost, and invented), where he goes into great detail on

the origin and scriptural foundation of many of the unique doctrines and practices of the modern Church of Jesus Christ.

After Callister discusses the evidences of the apostasy and gives a brief summation, he turns his attention to the restoration of the church. In this area, he provides much greater detail than most other books on the apostasy (with the recent publication by Scott Petersen being a notable exception). Other books include the restoration as almost an afterthought, or as a concluding chapter. Some do not address the restoration separately at all. Callister, on the other hand, devotes several chapters to God's preparation of the earth, beginning with the Renaissance and the Reformation and continuing through the American Revolution and the founding of the United States, and the final restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith. By including these chapters, Callister shows the overall arc of the story: the church fell, but it was restored; the true teachings of Christ were lost or changed, but they were revealed again by heavenly messengers to the boy prophet; the ordinances were changed and the priesthood taken from the earth, but they, too, have been restored in their fulness. In essence, the closing chapters of Callister's book finish answering the question he posed in the introduction, "What happened to Christ's Church?": It is here on earth, it has been restored, and it operates in the same way as the original church that Jesus Christ established when he walked on the earth.

Conclusion

Understanding the apostasy of the early Christian church is vital to comprehending the need for the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The books by Alexander Morrison and Tad Callister convincingly lead readers toward that understanding.