

as to obscure its trunk. More has been written about its excesses (real and imaginary) than about what actually happened. Stenhouse's anonymous chapter on the Reformation and Blood Atonement was typical.² Even church historian B. H. Roberts devoted twice as much space in discussing blood atonement in connection with the reform movement than he did to the Reformation itself.³

The Reformation, which represented a vigorous call to repentance within the Mormon ranks, presents varied facets to the student of history. To some it appeared as a reaction to the crop destruction of 1855-56 which was interpreted as a divine rebuke for wastefulness and moral laxity.⁴ To others it represented a drive for unity among the Saints in face of increasing "Gentile" invasion. Some explained it as a preparatory move against impending hardships, while others read into it the enlistment of divine support against increasing social and political opposition. It was all of these, and in a sense it was a New England conscience struggling with the moral expediencies of frontier life.

By means of public exhortations and catechizing in private, the soul-searching process swept over Mormondom at home and abroad in 1856 and early 1857, until every Saint was rededicated to "the Kingdom" through rebaptism or purged from membership. It was an emotional experience which regenerated the earth-bound masses spiritually to knit them into a more self-conscious brotherhood. It was a drive for unity against a threatening world.

But, unfortunately, the Reformation pot boiled over with emotional excesses, leaving ill effects to be mixed with the good in whatever proportions individual critics chose to present them. This accounts for such widely divergent reports as those of Matthias Cowley,⁵ B. H. Roberts,⁶ and Andrew L. Neff⁷ on the one hand, and T. B. H. Stenhouse,⁸ W. A.

² T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York, 1873), chap. XXXVI.

³ B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (6 vols., Salt Lake City, 1930), IV, 119-37.

⁴ In his forthcoming book, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints*, Leonard Arrington has a chapter detailing the events of the 1850's and gives good grounds for believing that economic factors had much to do with the Reformation of 1856-57.

⁵ Matthias Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City, 1909), chap. XXXIV.

⁶ Roberts, *loc. cit.*

⁷ Andrew L. Neff, *History of Utah, 1847-1869*, Leland H. Creer, ed. (Salt Lake City, 1940), 548-54.

⁸ Stenhouse, *loc. cit.*