

The author recounts several seminal events such as Parley P. Pratt's mission to Chile in 1851 and the translation of the Book of Mormon into Spanish, which was prompted by a series of remarkable impressions and dreams experienced by Militón González Trejo, who detoured to the Rocky Mountains in 1874 while on the way to the Philippines as an envoy of the Spanish Crown. Curbelo also explains that German Latter-day Saints were the first people to welcome Elder Melvin J. Ballard and his party to Argentina in the waning days of World War I and that most converts before 1950 were German or Italian immigrants.

The chapter entitled "Una iglesia de inmigrantes" (A church of immigrants) reflects this trend, suggesting that the Church in Argentina showed an interesting parallel to the history of the early Church in North America, namely, it was also primarily a church of immigrants: "Los inmigrantes generalmente están bien dispuestos a nuevas ideas y amistades. Esto resulta un ambiente propicio para escuchar a los misioneros. . . . Los primeros misioneros en Buenos Aires tuvieron mucha aceptación entre los inmigrantes alemanes, italianos y españoles" (87). ("Immigrants are generally disposed to new ideas and friendships. This results in a willing attitude to hear the missionaries. . . . The first missionaries in Buenos Aires were widely accepted by the German, Italian, and Spanish immigrants.")

After World War II, the net of the gospel spread rapidly across Argentina and neighboring Latin American countries. The next two decades saw more rapid conversion rates and ultimately the development of future leaders of the Church in Argentina and beyond, including current General Authority Elder Ángel Abrea of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Curbelo asserts that these leaders were prepared for their future callings as a result of the full-time missions they served, their exposure to the English language by their North American companions, and

the critical instruction they received from their mission presidents regarding Church organization and priesthood leadership.

In addition to its narrative, this small history, which runs 223 pages, also includes an impressive number of photographs (more than a hundred) documenting both local and North American missionaries, Argentine members and leaders, visits of General Authorities, church buildings (including the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple), and so on. Curbelo has taken an admirable first step toward a complete Spanish history of the Church in Argentina, filling a historical void that until recently has been largely ignored. On a personal note, as a young missionary serving in Argentina thirty years ago, I would often hear the names of the early Argentine Saints spoken of in reverent tones by local branch and district leaders. At the time, this respect piqued my desire to learn more about them, and this interest has remained with me to this day. For the same reasons, I believe many of my missionary contemporaries will appreciate this history as I did.

—Joseph E. Gonzalez

---

*City of Roses*, by R. A. Christmas (R. A. Christmas, 2000)

A poet, says Wordsworth, "is a man speaking to men." This is true of R. A. Christmas in his collection *City of Roses*. Christmas's poems have the conversational quality of things revealed quietly and briefly either to strangers or friends. They do not intend to shock or startle but to just speak. The vignettes are self-controlled with a sparseness (and sometimes humor) backed with worlds of meanings.

Dedicated "to the Pasadenans," Christmas's is an autobiographical fiction emerging from his childhood and adolescence in Pasadena, California. The poems remember a male past without nostalgia or ugliness. Though centered in time,

place, and culture, the poems also touch on universals such as identity (“His last name was laughable. / You couldn’t get past it without thinking / of twinkling trees, presents—”); family (“The Christmases were just middle-class / Methodists [no blood on our door post]. / My brothers and sisters are still kickin’. / Our avenging angel passed by. Why?”); and youthful sexuality (“her bed’s on the lawn. / The big Truck’s nearly full— / soon she’ll be gone.”)

*City of Roses* is readable and artistically—if not emotionally—pleasurable (“Easton Wash,” a poem dealing with molestation, represents the pain involved with any re-creation of the past). Subtle and understated as they are, Christmas’s poems do depend on their readers to read and believe in their poetry. Reading *City of Roses* awakened in me the desire to re-create my own life with words—and so passes one of my tests of effective poetry.

—Casualene Meyer

*Editor’s note:* For a sample of Robert Christmas’s poetry, see page 224.