

GOD, MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

George S. Tanner

God, Man and the Universe. By Hyrum L. Andrus. Bookcraft, 1967. xxiii, 507 pp. \$5.95.

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God, Man and the Universe is the first volume of a four-volume work entitled *Foundations of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ*. The author in his preface states, "This study is an effort to analyze the total spectrum of thought expressed by Joseph Smith. . . . In this work it is my endeavor to present Joseph Smith's thought in the depth and breadth that evidence makes possible." This preface could be misleading, since the book makes no attempt to analyze or evaluate Joseph Smith's thinking. Instead it deals with a number of theological subjects, each documented in the usual way with scriptural and other references. There are seventeen chapters with theological titles, each exhaustively treated. When the four volumes are completed it would appear that the author hopes to have an encyclopedic treatment of most of the beliefs of the Church.

Though the author handles many controversial subjects, he spends little time refuting opposing points of view. Indeed, he acts as though none exists. A sampling of ideas in the book will make the author's position clear. From Chapter Twelve, "Basic Concepts of the Creation Story," we learn that God doesn't make something out of nothing. The elements from which the earth was made are eternal. The earth was created near Kolob, which is the governing planet and which has a day equal in length to one thousand of our years. The length of each of the seven creation periods was therefore one thousand years, as the earth was then governed by the time reckoning of Kolob. So it actually took seven thousand years to do the creative work. Since it has now been about six thousand years since life was placed upon the earth, it was thirteen thousand years ago that the creation was begun.

While the earth was associated with Kolob it did not get its light from the sun but from God. Later it was "hurled into space" and took its place in the planetary system and the sun became its light. It also changed its reckoning of time to that of the present. This was a part of the "Fall." With the Fall the order of existence was changed, and blood became the sustaining factor within man and the animals.

The Fall changed the disposition of the animals as well. "During their physical-spiritual organization the animals were not carnivorous. But as a result of the fall the beasts became ferocious, and went prowling about the wilderness seeking the inferior animals for prey. When the earth is renewed during the millennium to a paradisiacal state, it will be transfigured by the glory and power of Christ; and although it will still be a temporal sphere and life will still be in a temporal state, the lion will again cease to be a carnivorous animal and will eat straw like the ox." Incidentally, before the

Fall, while they were in their physical-spiritual state, animals were able to communicate with humans.

On the question of the order of events in the creation, the author chooses to follow the scriptures which state that "man was the first flesh." He is not quite sure whether the creation of woman took place before or after that of the animals. He found scriptures on both sides of this question. He is very positive, however, that all life as we know it was created on the seventh day. While evolution is definitely out, the author does not accept the idea of a special creation, at least as far as life is concerned. The seeds for plant life and the parent stock for animals and man were transported from inhabited planets.

The temptation which brought about the Fall is taken quite literally. The serpent had legs, until the curse made him crawl, and was able to communicate with Eve.

On the outside jacket of the book we read, "When men like James E. Talmage and B. H. Roberts lived, their pens brought forth substantial and authoritative works in the field of Latter-day Saint doctrine. Such works are less common in our day. In this context it is refreshing and satisfying to read *God, Man and the Universe*, a work of exceptional scholarship and merit, and an in-depth treatment of the teachings and thought of Joseph Smith." The author of these lines is not given, but whoever it was he has evidently not read James E. Talmage and B. H. Roberts. These men were among the liberal and progressive men of their day, and their work betrays the progressive thinking of well-trained scientific minds. The present volume is at the opposite end on theological issues. All its conclusions are based on fundamentalist assumptions and "proved" from carefully selected passages.

The book is well written and quite convincing if one begins with the thesis that everything which the Brethren have said or are reported to have said is true. The author has done considerable reading, and the documentation of the book is impressive: footnotes for the seventeen chapters total 1,768 and if one includes multiple references in footnotes this would probably exceed two thousand. The most questionable part of the documentation is the uncritical use of sources. If the author has done any sifting of "evidence" it is not apparent. There are many references to second-hand sources and at least one third-hand source: after quoting an idea from the Prophet, Andrus states in the footnote, "As related by Dr. John M. Bernhisel and reported in R. C. Gemmel, 'Early History of the Medical Profession in Utah: Biography of Dr. W. F. Anderson,' typewritten MSS, Church Historian's Library." This is reaching quite a distance to prove a point.

One wonders who the author and publisher expect to have as a reading audience. The way the material is collected into chapters suggests something like Melchizedek priesthood classes might be the goal. This reviewer envisions many delightful hours will be spent by such classes in discussing some of the conjectural points raised by our author. Most well-read Mormons will find relatively few new things presented in the book, but whether the snake walked upright or crawled can always get up a warm discussion.