

pull out the barb and with it dismiss the whole book. And that would be unfortunate indeed; they cannot afford to dismiss this study for such superficial barbs, which may well have been intended as balm for members of the Reorganized Church, who have to grapple with veritable spears thrust into their sides.

Flanders's book may be uncomfortable for a more important reason. It is a monument to the irony of Mormon history. How much of the Nauvoo that Flanders establishes as a prototype for Young's Rocky Mountain kingdom are contemporary Utah Mormons willing to accept? How do they feel about Joseph Smith as king over the Council of Fifty and as Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion? And what is their real attitude towards polygamy? Admittedly, descendants of polygamous families still proudly acknowledge their heritage; but many Mormons clearly wish it had never happened. A leading historian at the leading state university in Utah for years avoided any mention of the subject; references to it in graduate theses were eradicated with the remark, "Too controversial!" Preston Nibley, it will be remembered, wrote an entire book on Brigham Young without mentioning the dread word once. The Nauvoo most Utah Mormons are willing to accept as a cradle for their institutions has more in common with the romanticized and superficial image of Cecil McGavin's *Nauvoo the Beautiful* (Salt Lake City, 1946) than with historical reality.

Utah Mormonism has moved subtly but distinctly in the direction of de Tocqueville. Not that anyone would publicly admit the change. Yet unquestionably, those who rejected Brigham Young and what he stood for in Nauvoo could more easily have accepted the kind of Mormonism found in Utah today. In many ways Nauvoo was less the prototype of the future than was the Mormonism of those who rejected all the city stood for. Today kingdom building is frowned upon not only in Independence but in Salt Lake City as well. Here is the larger meaning of Flanders's book. Clearly, it is a pivotal work in the historiography of Mormonism, one that could well initiate serious dialogue between the factions. If no Mormon scholar can afford to ignore it, neither can other Mormons of whatever persuasion.

MORMONS IN THE SIDE STREAM

Milton V. Backman, Jr.

Christian Deviations: The Challenge of the New Spiritual Movements. By Horton Davies. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965. 144 pp. \$1.45 (paper). Milton Backman is Associate Professor of History of Religion at Brigham Young University and serves in the presidency of his L.D.S. stake mission; he recently published *American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism*.

During the third week of January, 1966, millions of Americans united in prayer, beseeching God's assistance in their quest for Christian unity. One of the leading advocates of this ecumenical movement is Horton Davies, Putnam Professor of Religion at Princeton University. According to Professor Davies, the next stage in the reintegration of a divided Christendom is the uniting of "side-stream" Christianity with the "mainstream." Many Catholics and Protestants are not satisfied, he asserts in the recent reissue of

Christian Deviations, with the current divisions within the Christian fold and are working cooperatively to correct this problem. Unfortunately, he contends, many societies such as Pentecostalism, Seventh-day Adventism, Moral Re-armament, Mormonism, the Jehovah's Witnesses, British-Israel, Christian Science, Spiritism, and Theosophy have deviated considerably from traditional Christianity and are impeding the movement.

Rather than merely summarizing the beliefs of all these societies, Horton Davies emphasizes the unusual or peculiar concepts of the "side-stream" sects and condemns unrelentingly beliefs which conflict with his interpretation of the Christian gospel. According to Davies, Christians should endorse the Apostles' Creed and the reality of the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They should believe in an eternal life given through grace alone, based upon the fulfillment of certain moral and spiritual conditions. They should also adopt as the three interlocking authorities for the Christian faith, the Bible, the Church, and the individual inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible should be regarded as of primary importance, "the Church of secondary, and the inspired individual of tertiary importance."

Davies criticizes Roman Catholics for placing too much emphasis on the Church as a norm of faith. "The exclusive dependence upon the Church as the organ of truth leads to the propounding of unbiblical doctrines, such as the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin and the Immaculate Conception, as the essence of the faith." He also censures Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, British-Israelites, and Mormons for over-emphasizing the Old Testament to the detriment of the New, and classifies Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and Ellen G. White as "self-appointed prophets" who sought to displace Jesus. "Christian humility," he argues, "makes it unlikely for a mere human to pretend to a better insight into the mind of God than Jesus had."

Even though Davies is extremely critical of groups who depart from his version of Christianity, he fails to define precisely his interpretation of the gospel essentials. Davies argues that a paramount reason Christians should unite is to prevent the confusion that has resulted from sects competing in the mission field. Yet Protestant liberals who strongly support the ecumenical movement disagree sharply on the meaning of basic Christian dogma and endorse widely differing views of the Apostles' Creed. They would disrupt a reunited church fully as much as the deviants Davies condemns. How would missionaries of the world church answer questions such as: What is the Incarnation? Is Jesus the Son of God or the son of Joseph and Mary? What is meant by the resurrection of Christ? Many seekers would not be satisfied with the vague answers missionaries of such a world church might provide. "I don't know," a missionary would be forced to respond. "Doctrines have been de-emphasized. A wide latitude of belief exists in the church." The "clarity" proposed by Davies could not be a feature of the church contemplated by the current leaders of the ecumenical movement.

One of the most surprising aspects of this book is that so many oversimplifications, contradictions and other glaring errors have survived two editions. It is, for example, an exaggeration to say that Spiritism and Christian Science are attempts "to make one Christian tenet into the whole of Christianity." British-Israelites, Davies asserts at one point, have placed the writings of the Old Testament prophets on the same level as those found in the New Testament, but in a subsequent sentence he argues that they

hold the Old Testament to be more important than the New. He says on one page that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the "sect . . . most widely committed to missionary activity" and on the next that the "most active proselytizers among the sects are the Jehovah's Witnesses." He avers, without giving any evidence, that the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society is "the religion of the hard-pressed and frustrated, who without such faith and the company of their fellows at the bottom of the social scale, would be the utterly defeated," and that the British-Israelites' belief in a "chosen people" leads to the conviction that there is a "master-race." He overemphasizes the influence of William Miller on Seventh-day Adventist theology, stating that Mrs. White picked "the brains of William Miller." He incorrectly attributes the doctrine of investigative judgment to Mrs. White, failing to note that Adventists credit Hiram Edison with discovering this principle. Davies badly oversimplifies the unique aspects of the Seventh-day Adventists and Latter-day Saints by failing to discuss a number of their distinguishing beliefs.

The most inaccurate chapter is the one on Mormonism. It is incredible that a distinguished historian and theologian, teaching at a reputable institution would make so many mistakes. In all three editions of his work the date of the visit of a heavenly messenger to Joseph Smith is given as 1822 instead of 1823. In the current edition, Davies specifies the date that Utah entered the Union as 1895 instead of 1896. In the 1954 and 1961 editions, Davies states that the Mormons arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the spring of 1847. He improves the latest edition by saying that in 1847 Brigham Young "started for the Rocky Mountains with a selected group of stalwarts." But this later statement needs clarification, for a majority (possibly five-sixths) of the Latter-day Saints residing in Nauvoo and nearby communities began their journey to the Rocky Mountains in 1846. After spending the winter on the Great Plains, the first company under the direction of Brigham Young continued the migration west.

In addition to these mistakes, Davies neglects to describe in any detail Joseph Smith's account of the first vision and inaccurately describes the events that occurred between 1823 and 1827: "Four years later [meaning four years after the initial appearance of Moroni] he [Joseph] claimed that the angel instructed him where to look for the golden volume and then he immediately dug it up."

Davies's most serious error is his failure to differentiate between the theological speculations of Church members and accepted doctrines of the Church. On occasions he describes as established beliefs concepts which few members have held and which no reputable members have taught. Davies should be pleased to learn that Mormons themselves would classify many of these doctrines as Christian deviations.

Latter-day Saints, for example, do not deny the existence of Jesus before His incarnation as Davies charges; in fact, they believe He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and, like all the children of God, has always existed. Notions that Jesus is "the son of Adam-God and Mary" and that Jesus married the Marys and Martha at Cana have never been officially endorsed. Latter-day Saints do not hold that the Indians are "the lost ten tribes of Israel." The Church certainly does not claim that "all who are not Latter-day Saints will be everlastingly damned." On the contrary, Mormons believe that

all individuals who have not had an opportunity to accept the gospel of Christ in this life will be granted this privilege after death and before the Final Judgment. Although they hold that the wicked will suffer mental anguish following death, they interpret "eternal" punishment as punishment imposed by God. They reject the traditional concept of hell and a simple division at Judgment into "saved" or "damned" in favor of a great variety of opportunities for progression in a future existence. The Church does not teach that "the Atonement wrought by Christ is limited to the pre-Mormon dispensation"; and to charge that Mormonism is not Christo-centric "for Christ is to them merely a forerunner of Joseph Smith" is to display startling ignorance. Mormons believe that all men will be resurrected as a consequence of the Atonement and maintain that only those who accept Christ and live in harmony with the teachings of the Savior will fully benefit from Christ's action. These disciples will be cleansed of their sins preparatory to their return to God's presence.

A number of questions directed at Latter-day Saints have been proposed in this work. How could Nephi learn to speak and write "Reformed Egyptian" in Jerusalem, much less in America? And why did Nephi claim to have "engraved the first sacred plates in 'Reformed Egyptian'?" Davies overlooks the many economic and cultural ties between the Israelites and Egyptians in the seventh century before Christ and the likelihood that Nephi and other emigrants could have learned Egyptian before being uprooted. Moreover, Nephi did not claim to have employed a "Reformed Egyptian" language when he inscribed his history on the plates, for Nephi wrote, "I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2). Centuries after the Nephites arrived in America, Moroni mentioned that he and Mormon had adopted a language which they called "reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech" (Mormon 9:32). The reason for utilizing this language is also briefly explained: "If our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew [characters]" (Mormon 9:33), indicating that ideas could be recorded on less space using modified Egyptian than using the Hebrew language. Would Horton Davies question the assertion that the Egyptian (and Hebrew) language would change between 600 B.C. and 400 A.D. among a people isolated from the Old World?

"Are there any extant examples of pre-Columbian gold plates?" is another question proposed by Professor Davies. The answer is an emphatic yes. There are hundreds of such plates. He might have asked, "Are there in existence any pre-Columbian gold plates that contain writings by early Americans?" The answer to that question is probably no. However, some of the gold plates that archaeologists say were employed for ornamentation purposes contain inscriptions or decorations. These plates substantiate the claim that early inhabitants of this continent possessed the necessary technological skill to record their history on metallic plates.

In a work entitled *The Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964, pp. 92, 121), Dr. Sidney B. Sperry provides a possible answer to another question raised by Davies, "How can we account for 27,000 words from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible in Smith's 'translation'?" Sperry writes:

The text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is not word for word the same as that of the King James version. Of 433 verses of Isaiah in the Nephite record, Joseph Smith modified about 233. Some of the changes made were slight, others were radical. However, 199 verses are word for word the same as the Old English version. We therefore freely admit that Joseph Smith may have used the King James version when he came to the text of Isaiah on the gold plates. As long as the familiar version agreed substantially with the text on the gold plates, he let it pass; when it differed too radically he translated the Nephite version and dictated the necessary changes.

The same basic reasoning has been employed by Dr. Sperry to explain parallels in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, for Latter-day Saints believe that Christ delivered the same sermons and taught the same concepts to His "other sheep" in America as He did to the inhabitants of Palestine.

Another weakness of his work is that Davies has failed to include in his suggestions for further reading many excellent books discussing the beliefs of the societies considered. Because Davies primarily discusses doctrines rather than history, his selected bibliographies should include works such as *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1957); James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924) and *Let God Be True* (Brooklyn, N. Y.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1946) or *Things in Which It is Impossible for God to Lie* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1965).

In one respect, Davies's book indicates a failing of Latter-day Saints. In the preface to the third edition Davies writes that he is grateful for criticisms, both positive and negative, and trusts that the latest edition reflects the benefits of helpful suggestions. From these comments it seems that no Latter-day Saint has written to Professor Davies about the obvious errors in his book. Probably no Latter-day Saint was invited to review the first two editions, indicating a definite need for a publication such as *Dialogue*. In the past, Latter-day Saints have too frequently failed to reply to authors who have perpetuated myths about Mormonism.

This work further indicates a need for Latter-day Saints to produce more scholarly books on Mormonism and to promote their placement in libraries. Many non-Mormon authors have been greatly influenced by well-written but biased and unreliable works. When better books on Mormonism are available, critics are more likely to present the history and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints with greater accuracy.

THEOLOGY FOR A NEW AGE

Karl Sandberg

Honest to God. By John A. T. Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963. 143 pp. \$1.65 (paper). Karl Sandberg is Associate Professor of French Literature at the University of Arizona, where he recently published *At the Crossroads of Faith and Reason: An Essay on Pierre Bayle*; he observed European Christianity first-hand as an L.D.S. missionary in France.