

conversion"; Plato "missed the vital Discipline" of Christianity and was too "proud of little things that bear / Some semblance of the real"; and "the wastes [that Protestant reformers] came to / Shrink the image of man to what they are." Oddly enough, Larson himself is seldom a persona in his poems, barely even any kind of a voice. The poems, beautifully worked but austere, as a result lack a personal tone, a personality, a warmth for subjects, a humane hand extended to the world. Larson is hidden somewhere behind the lush imagery and sublime sound, as if he is a little afraid of his readers, a little different, a little indifferent. Larson's social satires are excellent—conventional churchgoers are those who "maintain the refuge [of] total Sunday — In lieu of total consecration"; the falsely pious are those who exclaim, "Behold how Jesus fills my soul"; the philosopher is "Nervous with preoccupation, — Staining all life with [his] preoccupation"; and the critics of Larson's own poems are "olympic esthetes" who "explore . . . surfaces" merely and "toss on a trampoline — Like automats, sticks of trash, — My scholarship alive with racking heat"—yet his main interests are not the problems of society and civilization but man's soul and beyond.

Are all these features of Larson's poetry—an emphasis on personal spiritual experience but lack of individual personality, intense enjoyment of the plentiful creation but consuming awe that amounts to greed of The Word, imagistic forms that set man soaring on his eternal scale but remove him from worldly necessity—are these also perhaps characteristic of the esthetic side of the Church?

What Larson's Christ says of himself in the poem "The Pyromaniac" is also true of the role Larson sees himself in as poet:

I raise the turrets of light that turn the earth
And make it pure: I am the sword flaming
In Eden forged against the milieu of man;
I am the son of morning, the keeper of flame,
The mime of the firegod before he comes.

One can be grateful for his effort and accomplishment in that role.

But as a final note, it must be mentioned that it almost seems unfortunate that the poems are published by B.Y.U. Press, for they will then not get the wide audience they need nor the objective critical attention they deserve. They deserve the best appearance as well, but here the poems are in no thematic or chronological order; they are crowded and the lines of type are dirty throughout.

Clinton Larson is a remarkable poet. I suspect that he has only begun his work. One can only hope that he has also begun to win over the hearts of his people.

PROBLEMS AND ANSWERS

John Sorenson

Answers to Book of Mormon Questions. By Sidney B. Sperry. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967. 261 pp., \$3.50. Dr. John Sorenson, an anthropologist by training, is head of the social science division of General Research Corporation in Santa Barbara.

Doctor Sidney Sperry has revised somewhat his 1964 book, *Problems of the Book*

of *Mormon*, and Bookcraft here offers the new version under a new title. The author was probably the first Latter-day Saint to obtain a Ph.D. in a field which bears directly on technical scriptural study. Over the years he has gained a large following among L.D.S. readers by producing a number of volumes interpreting and defending the standard works of the Church. The present book continues that approach.

The first two-thirds of the book is a series of unconnected essays, each examining a distinct question. Some are questions which "have puzzled the members of the Church" and which have been posed to the author at various times. For example: Did Father Lehi have daughters? Did Nephi talk to the Holy Ghost in person? Others have been presented as challenges to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon: Does the Book of Mormon quote Shakespeare? The final third consists of five chapters written as a systematic reply to a concerted attack in book form by one Arthur Budvarson, a former Mormon.

One solid virtue of the volume is that it makes available once more for Mormons Sperry's treatment of textual parallels between the Bible and the Book of Mormon. The discussion of the "Isaiah problem" in the Book of Mormon (the question of how the many quotations from Isaiah can be reconciled with the view held by most Biblical scholars that at least some of that Old Testament book were written after 600 B.C. when Lehi left Jerusalem) displays Dr. Sperry at his best, addressing comparative textual questions.

The new comments on more esoteric problems, such as Lehi's daughters, show that L.D.S. analysis of Mormon scriptures still can point out new information and insights. Both historical and doctrinal contributions are made in these essays, although I must confess disappointment that all the treatments stopped considerably short of where they might have been taken.

Chapters 17 and 18 ("The Problem of Iron, Steel and Other Metals," and "The Problems of the Horse and Other Domestic Animals") show what happens when a scholar steps outside his speciality; they are markedly weaker in evaluating and mustering evidence.

The scholarship employed is sometimes casual; it fails to follow through on particular issues to the point where one feels sure the author has conclusive control of his material. For example, "ziff," a metal mentioned in the Book of Mormon, Sperry thinks might well have been zinc (p. 147). He supposed the latter metal to have been known in Old Testament times, and therefore to the Nephites, since "brass" is mentioned a number of times in the Bible account and the metal we know by that name today contains zinc. Actually zinc was likely not known in Palestine when Lehi left there, and "brass" in the Old Testament is thought by almost all commentators to be a mistranslation for either "copper or bronze."

Sperry sometimes spoils a good thing by being too anxious to reconcile difficulties without facing up to their implications with the candor he demands of his opponents. He says, to cite an instance, "As for the Jaredites who left Asia about 2000 B.C., it can be said that they could readily have known about the production of wrought iron. But an expert in the history of the use of iron and steel, intent on being critical, might object somewhat if we say they could have known about the production of steel as early as 2000 B.C. And we are going to say it. . ." (p. 152). While the early use of iron can be documented, there is simply no historical evi-