

some suggest that we should not move our feet in Junior Sunday School on that account and that folding our arms would be fine. None of the sacrament songs mentions the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. The celebration of the central event of Christianity is left to one Easter song. If we are to suppose that the two Easter songs in the adult hymnal help significantly to fill the Easter silence I think we are quite wrong. Much of the greatest music of the western world deals with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. A children's hymnal that has room for six birthday songs and an adult hymnal that lists five "Militant Hymns" in its index should have room for more legitimate Easter music.

It would appear that *Sing with Me* has been prepared with limited vision. There are discrepancies between what we say to our children and what we do for them: we emphasize education and perfection but we don't seem to value it in composers; we emphasize the propriety of prayer language and ignore the possibility of addressing God with greater and greater refinement in music; we stress our understanding of God yet publish few songs that reflect His greatness; we believe in the Holy Ghost but often give Him the meanest musical vehicles with which to work.

For worship we borrow music and verse in order to express feelings which are beyond our own power to adequately express. Ideally, that which we borrow should accord with our highest sensibilities. Perhaps the greatest virtue of *Sing With Me* is that its flexible binding provides for songs to be deleted and added. The challenge to the General Music Committee is to take the best of *Sing With Me* and seek that which is most virtuous and most lovely to supplement it. Our children are malleable and willing to learn. We should give them an opportunity to worship according to their highest sensibilities as well.

## DECAPITATING THE MORMONS: RICHARD SCOWCROFT'S NEW NOVEL

*R. A. Christmas*

*The Ordeal of Dudley Dean.* By Richard Scowcroft. Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1969, 272 pp. \$5.95.

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Dudley Dean is a forty-year-old befuddled jack-Mormon professor of English. Wife Hannah has left him and married one of his teaching colleagues — a maudlin, oversexed boor named Ashton — and his devout Mormon mother has just died. Dudley returns to Salt Lake City after an absence of twenty years. He buries his mother, quits his teaching job, and decides to winter in the Wasatch while working on a book and angling for new employment. He sets up in the tower of an old East South Temple mansion, and divides his time between Elinore, a Mormon spinster left over from his eighth-grade

leatherwork class, and April, a South State coffee-joint waitress with a nice pink bedroom out by the airport.

The only lingering hang-up is seventeen-year-old son Tad, left behind with ex-wife and new hubby. Dudley's instincts tell him that he should have a hand in "shaping Tad into the fine man he had it in him to be." But the last thing he should become, of course, is a messed-up Mormon like his father. The book opens with Tad's arrival at the Salt Lake Airport to spend Christmas vacation with Dad. Before the holiday is over Dudley is to learn a great deal about his fatherhood, his son, and the part that his atrophied Mormon background wants to play in their relationship.

The theme of the book, in general, is individuality. Most of the comedy is generated by mistaken ideas of what individuality is, or by lack of respect for the individuality of others. Dudley's quest for mere rationality (Elinore is a "sex-starved virgin of forty"); Tad's precocious and subjective imagination (Elinore is "fascinating"); and April's simple-minded animality (going to bed with Dudley is "just like going to the bathroom") — these are the comically incomplete approaches to the problem. Tad's version seems to come closest to the ideal, since Dudley can't help trying to interest his son in a Mormon girl, and April, at the end, seems ready to fall for the phony tokens of a Mormon courtship.

The Mormons in the novel have no concept of individuality at all. Individuality to them means simply conformity to the "Truth" of Mormonism; all deviations are either attacked, ignored, or ridiculed; the only goal is the waters of baptism. Thus the Mormons perform the greatest comic sin in the book: they constantly seek to impose their one-track individuality on others.

Whenever Mormonism comes up, Scowcroft's narrative seems to shift gears: from realistic social comedy to direct, generalized satire. The average Mormon is simply not a "rational human being." Mormons think of people only as "meanings"; they "hang the moral price tag on every experience"; their naïveté is "scarcely to be believed"; and they go to their graves, like Dudley's mother, without ever questioning their lives. These and other negative traits are embodied in Hannah's sister Bessie and her family, and to a lesser degree in Elinore Alcorn and her maiden aunts. Elinore and her circle try to interest Dudley in a life of drinking sage tea, and Bessie and her tribe descend on Tad and Dudley in a misguided effort to brighten their Christmas by converting Tad and bringing his father back into the fold.

As the novel progresses it turns increasingly into farce and finally almost collapses under its weight of accumulated scorn. Bessie's people are, with minor exceptions, a collection of idiots. The standout is son Filmore, a returned missionary so insensitive that he can get himself invited to dinner (his second of the evening), and then accept half of Tad's steak and half of Dudley's, because he believes in "sharing the poverty of the Saints." Wife Hannah, it turns out, has returned to the Church and is now president of her Relief Society; and on New Year's Eve she and Ashton call to announce that they are "making a little sister for Tad . . . by God," and that Ashton