

# Reviews

*Edited by Edward Geary*

## THE FARM BOY AND THE ANGEL

*Leonard Arrington*

*The Farm Boy and the Angel.* By Carl Carmer. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970, 237 pp. \$5.95. Leonard Arrington, a distinguished Mormon historian, is a professor of economics and history at Utah State University.

Readers of *Dialogue* who have been searching for a sympathetic, readable, and reasonably accurate introduction to Mormonism to present to their non-Mormon friends may well consider Carl Carmer's *The Farm Boy and the Angel*. This appreciation of "The Mormon Vision and the Winning of the West," parts of which previously appeared in *American Heritage*, can be easily read in an evening and the tone is neither syrupy nor disdainful. The narrative — or, more properly, the panorama — spotlights episodes and incidents that have inherent dramatic power; Mormon history flashes by at an exhilarating pace.

The earlier chapters, which describe Joseph Smith's First Vision, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the organization of the Church, the conflicts in Missouri, and the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, touch these familiar incidents with new suspense. The latter portion of the book, which treats the Mormon trail, the early days in the Salt Lake Valley, the matter of polygamy, and the Church today, is less successful, but it still contains vivid "local color," some well-placed anecdotes and quotations, and some original description.

Latter-day Saint scholars will find nothing "new" in the book, either in the presentation of fact or by way of interpretation. The author is a distinguished poet, lecturer, and folklorist and does not pretend to convey the complexities and intricate details of the Mormon experience. (Bibliographers