

bridle. In excruciating desperation Jesse explodes his anger by firing his shotgun full in Czar's face. His rebellion stilled by his horror of his action, he reasserts his humanity by firing a second and infinitely more difficult shot to kill the horse. Swinging wide his arms, he hurls the gun into the deep grasses and falls on his face near the gruesome corpse of Czar. There his boys find him; bit by bit he acknowledges them, his responsibility, and his life. Sisyphus, having failed in his attempt to hurl his rock in the face of the gods, trudges again down the mountainside to retrieve it and with it start the ascent anew.

In summary the scene sounds heavy with philosophical weight; actually it moves quickly and lightly, its implications trailing along in its wake. Its salvation is the author's gift for glossing the whole with a fine sheen of humor, yet at the same time maintaining the sense of impact of the events on his characters. He seems able to show the comic mask not quite hidden behind seeming tragedy in such a way that we see life more real than real.

Such an awareness, accompanied by a compassion grown of understanding, I kept thinking as I read, could create a literary expression of Mormon experience which would be both truthful and significant. Harker's roots are in the Mormon communities of Southern Alberta; his adult world has expanded far beyond small-towns into modern urban Mormonism. He knows Mormon subjects, and he can write. The anticipation that those skills so evident in *Goldenrod* might be applied to the creation of a Mormon novel, with Mormon themes and Mormon characters, was the final excitement in this reading.

A Prophet's Goodly Grandparents

DEAN JESSEE

Joseph Smith's New England Heritage: Influences of Grandfathers Solomon Mack and Asael Smith. By Richard Lloyd Anderson. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1971. 230 pp. \$4.95.

Joseph Smith's New England Heritage by Dr. Richard L. Anderson is an important contribution to an understanding of Joseph Smith's immediate ancestry and the domestic environment in which he was raised. Since Joseph attributed dominant traits of his character to the influence of his "grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees;" and inasmuch as "books debunking Joseph Smith typically begin by downgrading his immediate ancestors," a careful study of Joseph's forebearers is long overdue.

This volume contains eight chapters divided into a prologue, an epilogue, and six chapters dealing with the lives of Joseph Smith's grandparents. Extensive notes provide much detail, enrichment, and clarification. Although limited to names, the index permits quick reference to members of the Smith and Mack families. Twenty-one illustrations give valuable assistance in showing family relationships, New England residences, and pictorial views of individuals and places mentioned in the book.

Chapters two to four focus upon Joseph Smith's maternal grandparents, tracing events in the life of Solomon Mack from his early war experiences to

his death in Gilsum, New Hampshire in 1820. Chapter three contains the text of the autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Solomon Mack* that was published about 1811, and is followed by the account of the miraculous healing of Solomon's daughter, Lovisa. Chapters five to seven detail the life and writings of Joseph Smith's paternal grandparents. Asael Smith, a Revolutionary War veteran, raised a large family and was a respected community leader in Tunbridge, Vermont. He later moved to New York and lived to see the publication of the Book of Mormon, which he read and accepted. Two extant Asael Smith holograph letters dated 1796 and 1799 are reproduced in chapter six. The family history written by Asael Smith's son, John, presented in chapter seven is the only account of Asael's life and the early years of his family.

Dr. Anderson cites numerous incidents in the lives of Joseph Smith's grandparents that draw attention to the moral fibre of the family. For example: Solomon Mack's willingness to gamble his life to save a fallen comrade during military action in the French and Indian War; and Asael Smith's desire to save his father's name "from going down to posterity as an insolvent debtor," by personally settling the father's estate when he died. This resulted in great hardship to Asael as he undertook to pay debts in a time of depression that had been contracted in a time of inflation, and at a time when "thousands of debtors in rural Massachusetts supported armed revolution rather than face compulsory collection and foreclosure proceedings."

Since a quarter of the book comprises extensive "notes on the text," the reader who ignores them because they are not conveniently printed at the bottom of each page will miss significant commentary. Many of the notes are small essays in and of themselves that present valuable insight and clarification on side issues and events. The extensive documentation, from hundreds of New England sources, is not only a tribute to careful scholarship and the legal-historical talents of the author, but presents a good test for the factual accuracy of the Smith and Mack writings.

