

religious conviction. The particulars may not have seemed as important as the ultimate truth of the work.

To raise doubts about the validity of some of Brodie's arguments is not to dismiss her book. Her biography will continue to have great influence upon professional historians until someone writes one with equal or greater plausibility. With the benefit of new sources and better insight into the intellectual and cultural background of early Mormonism, this may be possible. It is not enough to write reviews or articles for learned journals, for these are read by few, nor to publish volumes of new sources for these provide no substitute. Those who attempt a biography must write with courage, for no matter what they say many will disagree strongly. And they must write with insight and power, for one of Brodie's strengths is that her book is exciting reading. Above all, in the face of contradictory sources and world views, they must strive to tell the truth. It may do well to recall John Garraty's warning that "the average man is so contradictory and complicated that by selecting evidence carefully, a biographer can 'prove' that his subject is almost anything." To write the truth about a man who was so many sided, so controversial as Joseph Smith is a very difficult thing. Nonetheless, with an attitude less cynical than Fawn Brodie's, it is time for some of us to try.

Women: One Man's Opinion

CLAUDIA L. BUSHMAN

Woman and the Priesthood. By Rodney Turner, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1972. 311 pp. \$4.95.

Rodney Turner, a BYU professor of Church history and doctrine and a scholar widely revered as the conservatives' conservative, here attempts to answer some of the burning contemporary questions about which the scriptures are so scrupulously silent. Turner assembles and collates teachings of Church leaders and scriptures about women and then reasons from them to his own conclusions. He does this with passion and eloquence. Yes, Turner takes a hard line and a lofty position. No, his views are not binding because finally he has no more scriptural authority than the rest of us.

Of course he contends that woman, the "gentler and purer sex," finds her highest fulfillment as wife and mother, that happiness can be found only by becoming what she was meant to be. "To weaken or repudiate the profoundly distinctive qualities of either sex is to pervert the original natures of both. This is death." (p. 19) At this point Turner should come to grips with the real nature of woman and how he knows what it is. Everything depends upon the establishment of real differences between men and women. But we are given only a few spiritual-anthropological generalities and a couple of Brigham Young's quotes to the effect that women are more easily converted than men and that their presence in saloons is more sinful than men's.

In fact Turner goes on to conjecture that as God is not coercive, individuals must have chosen their own sexes. This neatly avoids the notion that women

were second rate spirits, but does indicate that personality preceded sexuality. If sex was voluntarily acquired at any point in pre-mortal life, then it should not completely shape mortal existence. Women should be people first. Turner believes they should be women first but fails to anchor his belief in solid evidence.

In the garden, Turner tells us, Adam and Eve were literally equal, with equal access to God. He describes a triangle with God at the apex. After the fall when Eve was undone, the authority relationship became vertically linear: God commanded Adam who commanded Eve. So while women remain equal, they must be given to men (hopefully with their consent) to be led and protected. Woman still enjoys this "obligation to submit to the leadership of fallen man" (p. 58). (One might say that while man is punished for his own sins, woman continues to be punished for Eve's.) Turner tells us that meek obedience to one's husband is only enlightened self-interest, that a woman has no more reason to resist her husband's commandments than those of loving parents. What is more this submission will be the means of woman's very exaltation. He heaps special praise on women who willingly sustain less gifted and knowledgeable husbands. A wife may be better educated, more gifted and wiser than her husband. This is often a trial to her, but it is for her to manifest a spirit of meekness and to honor him in his station. In doing so, she leaves him without excuse should he then fail to magnify his calling. (p. 99)

Turner's idealization of the childlike dependent is unfortunate indeed. Why must we be sold the standard nineteenth century view of passive woman when early Utah was full of independent and achieving women who disproved it? Surely a woman's abilities should be utilized for the benefit of the family and society. A priesthood holder is obliged to encourage his wife's skills and to listen to her advice; it is his duty. The husband and wife should strive together.

Mormon women, taught to be dependent on husbands or fathers, are victims too often. As Turner says himself, the dependent Mormon woman, left alone, is extremely vulnerable. Our culture unfortunately tends to make heroines of these bereft women. The widowed mother of many who educates her children by scrubbing floors should not be eulogized but taught a skill. A woman must be prepared to support her children if necessary.

As for children, Turner tells us that mother must always be home and available. A woman must be taught that "nothing (she) may do outside of the home can begin to equal in lasting significance the things (she) can accomplish in the home" (p. 32). Self-sacrifice is the key. "How many gifted men and women have willingly sacrificed their desires and abilities for others!" (p. 31) Such escapes from the nursery as are allowed are described in romantic nineteenth century fashion. A husband "knows that she has needs which leap the walls of home and go bounding off across the fields. The inner woman is a young girl — a blithe spirit. She cannot *live* without sunshine, flowers and spring winds" (p. 302).

While he does not clearly state that a woman must have as many children as possible or that the largest family is necessarily the best, he inclines in that direction. He speaks out against all artificial methods of birth control allowing only restraint and rhythm. Although some Church authorities have

justified other practices, he is adamant: "Artificial birth control is spiritually if not physically harmful irrespective of the 'stand' of the Church. It is intrinsically wrong" (pp. 219-220). He marshalls considerable support for the questionable doctrine that spirit children are queued up in heaven awaiting admittance to particular families. Bad conditions on earth never justify closing those heavenly doors.

Actually I agree that the wife and mother roles are the most rewarding for women, but active motherhood fills a mere quarter of a woman's life span. Surely some other activities should be encouraged. An individual's good works and righteousness must be more important than how many children she bears or whether she bears any at all. The Church has long honored faithful women of widely varying life styles.

Professor Turner's book is destined to be read and discussed at length, and its confident tone and scholarly trappings will convince some readers that he speaks the truth. Unfortunately, there is simply not enough evidence to write such a prescriptive book. The scriptures say very little about women. No woman of note emerges from the Book of Mormon. The Bible gives us the tantalizing story of Eve, but surely the patriarchs' wives should not serve as examples for us. The only semi-doctrinal mention of a mother-in-heaven comes from a poem written (sigh) by a woman. Female models are few.

But aside from a scarcity of information, I think he distorts the sources he has. In an effort to indicate unanimity, the quotes from General Authorities are treated as a single source. These remarks, ranging over one hundred and forty years, are often quoted without identification and the names of the speakers and the dates mentioned only in footnotes. We all know that General Authorities' views differ on interpretive subjects and that some feel more strongly about certain issues than others. By choosing quotes that substantiate his own views, Turner indicates agreement where it does not exist.

While some readers will agree with this delineation of woman's eternal role, others will be offended. All readers should recognize the book as one man's interpretation of existing evidence and not as final scriptural authority.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull: An Ornithologist's Rod McKuen

CLIFTON HOLT JOLLEY

Listen-up bird-lovers, Hindus, Eddy Rickenbacker, Father Schillebeeckx, and Unitarians everywhere: *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* has arrived! Somewhat sooner and with greater flurry than many of us would have wished, perhaps, but, then, that's his style, and style is, ultimately, what J. L. Seagull is all about.

If you haven't read the book (a feat no less impressive than never having seen an "un-cola" billboard) nor been "enlightened" (*sic*) by a friend, then let us say that it is about a bird . . . and from there it is all down hill, at speeds in excess of 214 MPH—something of a breakthrough, actually. But rather than go into any further details concerning this hard-cover pamphlet's plot—