

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—

it takes longer to summarize than to read — we may simply note that not having read it puts one in a better position to critique the book than having invested the thirty minutes (outside) that it takes to carefully study it. Having read it one must admit to having done so, whereby one's judgement and integrity become immediately suspect.

It's really not too surprising that *Seagull* should come along just now. The Marxist theory of literature and history should have clued us that, what with the "counter-culture" having predictably tired of the Eastern philosophies and turned to Christianity, something of a synthesis was in the offing. First Ginsberg chanting his mantras on *Johnny Carson*, then *Superstar*, and finally Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" with a "krishna" chorus thrown in for "relevancy." How marvelous!

And where does *Seagull* fit in? A few steps behind where the establishment always is, like a gaggle of greedy geese (or seagulls, if you prefer, although it doesn't scan as well) gobbling the crumbs left behind by the "freaks" — crumbs turned, somehow, respectable through the mediation of time and practice. Hence the paradox: culture, counter-culture, synthesis — and we are all the same again, with *Seagull* delivering the *coup de grace* this time.

This whole business about virgin birth and divine parenthood has always been a bit sloppy anyway — neither good for business nor conducive to the life of a conservative "swinger" — so, when something comes along (with pretty pictures, no less) to offer a socially acceptable alternative, it is little wonder that "Middle America" should snatch it up. As it turns out, however, the alternative is even more incredible than the initial premise. One is merely asked to believe that a seagull who looks like Charlton Heston, sounds like Kahlil Gibran, and has the moves of Parnelli Jones, appeared to one Richard Bach and unravelled for him life's knot. In the process, J. L. Seagull (Jesus Christ) is revealed to be mere mortal, the Great Gull (God) is inferred to be a pleasant myth by which to encourage the flock (you and me) until such time as they, we, or whoever attain a higher sphere of existence where everyone talks like the result of having unsuccessfully mated Dale Carnegie with Ralph Williams ("... of 'Ralph William's Ford,' right on the corner of . . .").

All of this I am willing to let go by the boards in the interest of free speech, poetic license, or whatever. Indeed, I should have bitten my tongue and silently thought, "that's alright, Bach, you'll get yours," were it not for two blatant travesties which are in need of being set right.

Firstly, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, which is assumed by its editors to be "a story," is the most simple-minded bit of tractarian nonsense since *Robinson Crusoe*, which has the advantage of being fun. With all the subtleties of a wet mop, Bach has established himself as the newest oracle of our time. Thus following in the McKuen tradition which assumes that if one gushes enough one may be mistaken for a fountain at which humankind may go to drink, Bach has proven the assumption sadly true. However, like Henry VIII's involvement with the Anglican Church, one may wonder if it is any more than an inept rationale on the part of Bach for the abandonment of his domestic responsibilities. In either case such a criticism is probably too cynical and too simple. Bach may well believe in what he is doing, which makes it all the more a pity that he does it so poorly.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Bach assumes — nay, insists —

that seagulls are lazy creatures in dire need of reform. Now, I don't know about "Middle America," but I have always liked seagulls just the way they are. They eat crickets. Where would Brigham and the Saints have been had the seagulls been converted earlier to clicking-off power-dives for fun and profit (no pun intended). No, I like gulls as they are, and if they don't sell as many cars that way, well, I can stand the loss.

Jonathan Livingston Seagull: make a point to miss it, unless an illiterate Rod McKuen (intentional redundancy) in feathers (not too difficult to imagine, really) is your idea of a good time.

Brief Notices

DAVIS BITTON

Frontier Tales: True Stories of Real People. By Juanita Brooks. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1972. Western Text Society Special Publication. 57 pp. \$2.00.

Juanita Brooks has long been known as a remarkable story teller. This thin volume contains eight of her stories, whose flavor is suggested by their titles: "Sam's Courtship"; "The Buckskin Pants"; "A Young Business Man on the Trail"; "Wabash, A Night In a DeLamar Saloon"; "A Strange Hiding Place"; "Mary Platte and the Molasses Barrel"; "The Joke was on the Town"; and "Griz."

Mormonism's Negro Policy: Social and Historical Origins. By Stephen G. Taggart. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970. Second printing, paperback, 1972. 76 pp. \$2.50.

Already reviewed in *Dialogue* (winter, 1969), this small volume is now available in an attractive paperback format. The thesis is suggested by the conclusion: "To suggest that Negroes are under a divine curse, that a black skin is any less desirable than a white one, or that Negroes are in any way morally inferior is to accept and perpetuate the erroneous scriptural argument utilized by Southern fundamentalism. Its consequence also is to compromise the moral quality of Mormonism by accepting a substantial hindrance to the primary mission of the Church — the promulgation of Christ's gospel of love and brotherhood."

Profiles of the Presidents. By Emerson R. West. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1972. 375 pp. \$5.95.

This book has no scholarly pretension yet offers several features that will undoubtedly make it popular among Church members. For each President of the Church from Joseph Smith to Harold B. Lee the author has compiled some pictures, personal experiences, a testimony, and selected quotations. For each of them also there is a brief profile and a chronological chart. As a thought-provoking addendum, Mr. West has added "Questions About the Presidents": which President was the tallest? Which traveled the most? Which had the most children? Which was born a British subject? etc. Answers are provided.