

Sometimes, when asked for specific advice from the southern communities, Church leaders equivocated and straddled the issue; at other times their advice was both specific and wise. One of the more sobering findings of Brothers Arrington, Fox, and May, is that despite considerable sacrifice, little spirituality actually resulted from the northern experiments, and in the large urban centers of Ogden and Salt Lake the order was patently unworkable.

I have only two minor criticisms to offer. First, the closer one gets to the present the less objective these writers seem to become. The standards of criticism so clearly evident in the 19th century are not so clearly evident when discussing current leaders and programs. Unlike the earlier period, there are no disagreements among living General Authorities, no mistakes or inconsistencies in current doctrine and all seems well in Zion today. I believe that I understand the reasons for this scholarly hesitancy, but they are not so compelling for a reviewer as they are for an author. Second, including a discussion of the Church's Welfare Plan of the 1930's and contemporary food storage programs—which comes decades after the demise of the last United Order—stretches the concept of the original stewardship idea a bit far. There is not the slightest desire to achieve greater economic equality within the Church today, and cooperating with the secular government which was then attempting to destroy the Kingdom is hardly what the Mormons of that day had in mind. Nor is the "sharing of burdens" in depressed times an exclusively Mormon idea. Any Christian—indeed any American—could easily participate in the Church's welfare programs today. But even the most devout Mormons far removed from the thrust of capitalism were unable to make a go of the truly radical notions of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. Comparing the demise of the stewardship principle with the contemporaneous demise of the polygamy principle would have been, to my mind, a much more interesting and historically defensible undertaking than trying to tack current efforts onto experiments long since discontinued.

Despite these shortcomings, *Building the City of God* must be judged a signal achievement which ranks among the very best books about Mormonism written in the past several years.

Artful Analysis of Mormonism

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The Story of the Latter-day Saints. By James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, in collaboration with the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1976. xi + 722 pp. Notes and Index. \$9.95.

Since its 1922 publication, Joseph Fielding Smith's *Essentials in Church History* has been regarded by Mormons as the standard one volume account. Even

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though it was continually expanded and up-dated through 28 editions (most recently in 1973), it retained obvious defects. In the words of Leonard Arrington, Church Historian, it is "theologically oriented," and primarily an account of "the recurring conflict between the Church and its 'enemies,'" with "no attempt to relate Mormon history to contemporary national developments." When President Smith died in 1973, Church officials and Deseret Book Company requested that the Church Historical Department prepare a history that would meet the same needs as *Essentials*. With the approval of the First Presidency, Arrington appointed James B. Allen, Professor of History at Brigham Young University, and Assistant Church Historian, and Glen M. Leonard, a Senior Historical Associate in the department to prepare the history. The result is the most important volume yet produced in the new Mormon history. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* has been received so enthusiastically by Church members that at this writing, it has sold more than 20,000 copies.

Perhaps the authors' most scholarly contribution lies in their artful analysis of Mormonism within the context of American history. For instance, they perceptively treat the "Mormon Question" in politics in relation to national concerns, particularly the Know-nothing and Republican Parties. As professional historians and active Mormons, the authors have achieved a remarkable blend of the scholarly approach and the religious story. When recounting an event of religious significance, they are careful to speak as historians, "according to Joseph and Oliver," and "according to Joseph's account." They do not feel constrained to bear testimony, and yet they demonstrate an empathy toward Mormonism that could only emanate from devoted members. It is a pleasing balance.

In refreshing contrast to Joseph Fielding Smith's morality play, Allen and Leonard freely and frequently describe the Saint's imperfections, concluding, for instance, that they were not without blame in early persecutions. Although somewhat textbookish, the narrative flows smoothly with a consistent style. The interpretation, on the other hand, is curiously inconsistent. Due to Allen's special research, the treatment of the First Vision must be regarded as progressive, even though it does not include an examination of the various accounts. In what may be a surprise to some Mormons, the authors note that Joseph Smith stopped recounting the story very early because of his desire to protect sacred things from contempt.

An especially refreshing approach is made to the translation process of the Book of Mormon, the authors suggesting that words did not miraculously appear, nor did a literal translation pop into Joseph's mind. Rather, "he was forced to concentrate deeply, attempting to determine the meaning for himself, and once he had the idea correct, he would know by a divine confirmation that he was right." Noting that ideas are expressed differently in different languages, the authors claim that the best translations "always carry the marks of the translator himself, who inevitably uses certain idioms and expressions characteristic of his training and background." As a result, the language of Joseph Smith's time and the grammatical problems he possessed also appear in the Book of Mormon, especially in the first edition. The only disappointing aspect of this enlightening discussion is the authors' annoying decision to "pass the buck" for the interpretation, prefacing it with

"many Latter-day Saints conclude . . ." Unfortunately, this awkward propensity to avoid ultimate responsibility for interpretation pervades the work.

The authors treat Martin Harris' delivery of the Book of Mormon manuscript fragment to Charles Anthon realistically, suggesting that Anthon probably could not verify the translation, and that Harris may have read too much into what he said. With respect to the Book of Abraham, the authors admit that the papyrus fragments discovered in 1967 were not part of the Abraham text. But plausibly, they suggest that the scrolls themselves may have been "catalysts that turned Joseph's mind back to ancient Egypt and opened it to revelation on the experiences of Abraham." With perception, they conclude that when applied to Joseph Smith, "the term 'translator' thus has a special meaning."

The authors tastefully compare the temple endowment with Masonic ritual, suggesting that "many parts of the endowment can be seen in ancient religious ceremonies," but that the meaning remains a distinctive part of Mormon faith. They are equally frank and evenhanded in their treatment of polygamy, tracing its beginning to 1831, and suggesting that Joseph Smith "may have begun taking plural wives as early as 1835." Even though they cannot resolve it, they briefly refer to the very sensitive issue of whether Joseph lived as husband with any of his plural wives. Allen and Leonard correctly acknowledge that "probably between 10 and 14 percent of the families in pioneer Utah" practiced polygamy, instead of the stereotyped two or three percent most Mormons are programmed to believe. Even so, many of the pioneers avoided polygamy, and those who entered it usually stopped at wife number two. The authors' explanation of the Manifesto exemplifies both the insistent pressure of the federal government and the firm Mormon belief in revelation. Said Wilford Woodruff: "The Lord showed me by vision and revelation exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice." These are issues that are rarely covered in the usual "church book," let alone with the insight evident here.

On the other hand, the authors are disappointing on a number of other important facets of Mormon history. One noticeable weakness is their unenlightened description of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. First attributing the murders to "an angry band of Indians and a few overzealous settlers," (an unfortunate phrase reminiscent of Nixon's overzealous lieutenants), they claim that it is "difficult to ascertain" just "exactly how the tragedy occurred," a mysterious conclusion in light of Juanita Brooks' definitive work. Of the Mormons involved, only John D. Lee is considered worthy of mention, and even then his true role is not delineated. It is not made clear that he was executed in later years as an obvious scapegoat, or that two stake presidents, William H. Dame and Isaac Haight escaped punishment even though they played key roles in the development of the massacre.

Another disappointment is the authors' decision to virtually ignore slavery as it related to Mormon history. They just barely mention the "Free People of Color" controversy in Missouri, and do not bother to cite the presence of slaves in the first pioneer migration to Utah in 1847. What happened to Green Flake, Oscar Crosby, Hark Lay, or the most famous black priesthood holder, Elijah Abel? Finally, Allen and Leonard erroneously characterize the denial of the priesthood to the black as the consistent policy of the Church.