

is especially good. The dynamics of a barter economy and the administration of the early public works program in Utah are also discussed here with insight and understanding. Those who seek a good capsule summary of the Utah Expedition, the Godbeite schism, or the duties of a nineteenth-century Mormon bishop will find all that and much more in this busy book.

It is true, leading bits of *obiter dicta* have crept into the manuscript here and there ("Edwin had committed himself to Mormonism, and, like many another strong-minded man, he enthusiastically submerged his will to the vision of the thirty-four-year-old prophet") but *Quaker* is generally free of didacticism. Indeed, such indelicate

matters as the growing irascibility of Brigham Young, the turbulence of polygamy and the strange excesses of the Reformation (Jedediah Grant "threatened to send the police around to wash the bishops if they wouldn't do it themselves") are discussed as a matter of course. For anyone who prefers his history without the golden questions, here, for the remarkable price of \$6.95, is a golden opportunity.

STANFORD J. LAYTON is Managing Editor of the *Utah Historical Quarterly*.

---

## Militant Mormon

GLEN M. LEONARD

*The Kingdom or Nothing: The Life of John Taylor, Militant Mormon.* By Samuel W. Taylor. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976, 406 pp. \$15.00.

The publication of two biographies of major figures in Mormon history within a year is no small event. That both Donna Hill's *Joseph Smith* (Doubleday, 1977) and Samuel W. Taylor's *Life of John Taylor* have issued from national publishing houses confirms once again the proposition that Mormons can write dispassionately about their own history for the commercial market. It was specifically this goal Sam Taylor had in mind when he set out to recreate the life of his grandfather, an apostle and third president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While the book does its share of debunking, dustjacket sensationalizing and humanizing, it retains a warmth, a specialized vocabulary and a particular set of assumptions that infuse it with unmistakable *Mormonness*.

The John Taylor presented to us through the pages of this carefully crafted book commands a physical and intellectual presence considered by the author to be akin to that of Joseph Smith. A dashing handsome man who attracts and marries only culturally sensitive and beautiful women, Taylor is typecast as a debonair, English gentleman set against the stereotyped frontier of Brigham Young's Utah. The author would have us believe that Taylor relaxed the authoritarian rule inherited from Young, and he portrays his grandfather as more comfortable with worldly fare than his immediate predecessor: Taylor as author, scholar and intellectual finds a bond of mutual respect in his encounters with Richard Burton, T. B. H. Stenhouse, William S. Godbe and Edward W. Tullidge and other Mormons who were "liberals and idealists, intellectuals who had chafed under Brigham's regime."

Sam Taylor wants his grandfather to live, to be a real person, so he clothes him with

human traits: a lifelong liking for black tea, an eye for pretty girls and a conservative skepticism over newfangled inventions such as electric street lighting. The emerging portrait includes other consistent elements: Taylor's unbending commitment to the Kingdom, particularly to its nineteenth-century marriage system; his dependence upon divine guidance when the going got rough; and his constant concern for wives and family. Sam Taylor molds these facts into a believable whole, a multi-faceted portrait of an admired ancestor.

The book deals with such interesting events as Taylor eluding the federal agents ("skunks"); Brigham Young's death; George Q. Cannon jumping train to escape the feds; the controversial 1886 polygamy "revelation." Sam Taylor tries to "set the record straight" or to poke at traditional and standard historical interpretations. The author's collaborator and brother, the late Raymond W. Taylor, of Provo, Utah, pursued all available avenues to information. Among the most delightful of his finds was the frank 1849-52 missionary diary of Curtis E. Bolton, John Taylor's companion in France, which offers an inside view of their not always successful proselytizing.

However, readers should be warned that some of Sam Taylor's speculations deserve careful investigation, especially his resurrection of the poisoning theory as the cause of Brigham Young's death. Informed historians find no foundation whatever to this, and they use as part of their evidence the diaries of attending physician Seymour B. Young.

Sam Taylor is first of all a writer, competent at his craft and experienced in scenario. Readers of *The Kingdom or Nothing*

should not expect methodically footnoted and historically reliable biography. This book is skillfully staged, and the scenes are molded with commendable skill without precise attention to historical context. The result is true-to-life, but fictionalized history. His technique is that of the novelist. Traditional Mormon sources, family folklore, non-Mormon writings, unpublished documents and journalistic reports all provide fodder for Sam Taylor's dramatization. Dialogue, characterization, and conflict are woven into scenes that the reader can readily visualize. The tension builds and wanes with each confrontation: the overplayed strain of the Taylor and Young personalities at odds; the comic seriousness of a cops-and-robbers game of hide-and-seek on the "underground"; the counterpoint of Gentile prostitution set against Mormon polygamy. Literary techniques bring events within Taylor's consciousness, causing the subject of this study to stand forth as an aware, thinking, active character on the stage of Mormon history.

*The Kingdom or Nothing* is less adulatory than the B. H. Roberts portrait of John Taylor written in 1892, yet it is still laudatory. More readable than most family history it is also more entertaining, but it is less dependable than the work of traditional biographers. This book will inform non-Mormons without offending them and it will probably dismay and delight the Latter-day Saints.

GLEN M. LEONARD is a research historian and associate editor of *Journal of Mormon History*.

---

*Great truths—whether of science or religion—should be available to all who seek them. If it means anything at all, "free agency" insisted upon by the Church means freedom to think and to act. In no quest is freedom more to be desired than in the pursuit of the truth of scripture, for here we confront God in his supreme Revelation.*

*Heber C. Snell  
Vol. II, No. 1, p. 74*

## AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES

The following Dialogue back issues are available at \$5.00 per issue:

Vol. VIII	#3 & 4	Science & Religion (Double issue)
Vol. IX	#1	General Issue (Juanita Brooks)
Vol. IX	#2	General Issue (Watergate)
Vol. IX	#3	General Issue (Letters of Faith)
Vol. IX	#4	General Issue (Roundtable of Mormon Literature)
Vol. X	#2	Sexuality and Mormon Culture
Vol. X	#3	Imagemakers: Mormons and the Media
Vol. X	#4	General Issue (Book of Mormon)

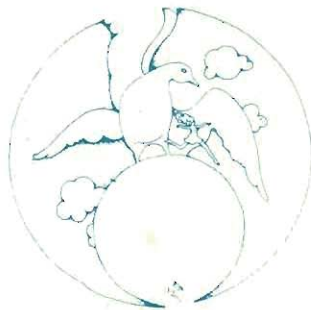
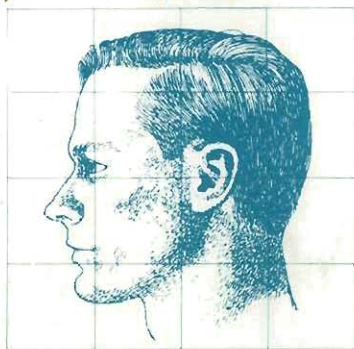
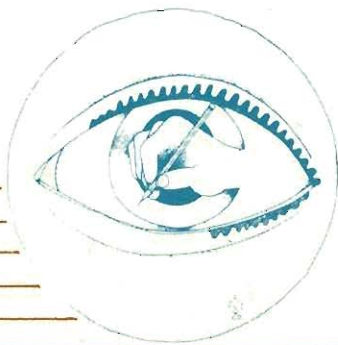
Send check or money order:

Dialogue  
Post Office Box 1387  
Arlington, Virginia 22210

## AVAILABLE SOON

Special Supplement: Ten Volume Index

*Dialogue welcomes Articles, Essays, Poetry, Fiction, Notes and Comments, and Art Work. Manuscripts should be sent in triplicate, accompanied by return postage, to Editor, Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, P. O. Box 1387, Arlington, Virginia 22210.*



*Dialogue:*

