

in two chapters. Post-Manifesto polygamy is discussed on p. 184 and then more adequately and with some duplication on pp. 245–6. There is anomaly in the fact that *Valley Tan* and the *Salt Lake Tribune* appear in Part Two while the *Deseret News* is not introduced until Part Three.

Both *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* and *The Mormon Experience* incorporate recent research. Both are products of the talented staff of the LDS Historical Department, whose mobilization of historical resources and productivity in publication recall the accomplishments of Hubert Howe Bancroft a century ago. Allen-Leonard is a narrative history of the Church, aimed primarily at the Mormon audience. Arrington-Bittton is an interpretive history aimed primarily at non-Mormons. The first work fulfills its objective. The second falls a little short of its mark, described on its striking dust jacket as becoming “the standard one volume history of the institution and its people.” It is an important work, and some of its chapters are outstanding. A second printing is already correcting discrepancies of the type noted above. (It is to be hoped

that the Allen-Leonard volume—already out of print—will be accorded a similar opportunity.

When O’Dea wrote about “sources of Strain and Conflict” in the 1950s, he quoted a “Salt Lake City Mormon intellectual” as saying, “Only the questioning intellectual is unhappy.” (*The Mormons*, p. 224) In dwelling at some length on the pre-World War I Chamberlin-Peterson controversy at B.Y.U., and then saying virtually nothing about subsequent intellectual tensions, *The Mormon Experience* may leave the impression that O’Dea’s observation is no longer germane. This reviewer is flattered that his *Dialogue*-launched symbolism about “Iron Rods” and “Liahonas” is used on the last two pages of the book to support the up-beat thesis that “The checks and balances inherent in the two traditions and types of membership give Mormonism both stability and progressivism”. A rather persuasive case can be made, however, that the institutional Church is today less tolerant of intellectual questioning than at any time in the past generation.

## *Out of the Slot*

*Patriarchs and Politics: The Plight of the Mormon Woman.* By Marilyn Warenski. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978. 104 pp. \$10.95.

*Reviewed by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Ph.D. candidate at the University of New Hampshire and member of the board of Exponent II. She is preparing a book-length study on female roles in early New England.*

Mormons who believe feminism is deeply subversive will find confirmation in Marilyn Warenski’s *Patriarchs and Politics*. Her argument can be simply stated: Feminism and patriarchal religion are incompatible. Mormonism is a patriarchal religion. Therefore, there can be no such thing as Mormon feminism. For two hundred pages she reinforces her point by referring to Latter-day Saint “feminists” in quotes.

Warenski opens with a description of two

mass meetings of Utah women. The first, held in 1870, has been called “the most remarkable women’s rights demonstration of the age.” The second, the International Women’s Year conclave of 1977, became “one of the greatest anti-feminist demonstrations of our time.” The author’s interpretation of these two events sets the theme for the rest of the book. In her view, the seeming contradiction between Mormon suffragists of the nineteenth century and Relief Society activists of today is explained by the one constant in the history of Latter-day Saint women—devotion to the brethren.

The Relief Society, Warenski concludes, has always been little more than a “Sisterhood of the Brotherhood.” Although it made notable contributions to the development of the early west, even then its activities reflected “a complex mix of female strength and resourcefulness with female

submissiveness in a male authoritarian culture." They acted as the brethren directed. In our century, the brethren have directed an increasingly narrow role. "If for some Mormon women the idea of Christianity is to bake a cake for a sister when she is down," she argues, "it is also to turn her back on the major social problems that plague the world."

A few women resent this, but there is little they can do. In the only state in the union "where canning fruit can be directly related to eternal salvation," it is not easy for a talented housewife to find time for more significant endeavors. In this Skinner type utopia, "there are some unyielding members who keep popping out." (Warenski obviously considers herself one of these.) Others come crawling out, but "an unknown number feel locked in and remain constantly squirming at the bottom of their slots, and because women's slots are smaller and more confining than men's slots, some of them are stuffed in so they can't move. Squashed under the pressure of oughts and shoulds, of obey and conform, they find themselves truly in a bind."

As described by Warenski, "the plight of the Mormon woman" is primarily the plight of an insecure minority who want to see traditional roles expand but are afraid to attack the real source of their problems—the male priesthood. The faithful Mormon who believes herself a feminist has only two choices—to pray for a revelation or to foment a revolution. Warenski sees little hope for either. An organization run by aging businessmen has little capacity for change, and "ironically women who care enough about the Church to want to reform it would have too much to lose in the endeavor." Referring to "the continued exclusion of black males from the priesthood," she predicts hard times ahead for liberals.

Readers of *Dialogue* and *Exponent II* will recognize both the historical ironies and the anguish described in Warenski's book. But they will be disappointed if they expect to find in it a "searching examination of the Mormon culture." *Patriarchs and Politics* is a forceful polemic, but it is not the weighty work of scholarship its publishers promise. The much touted interviews with contemporary Mormon women are vaguely cited as "Marilyn L. Warenski's Oral History Project, transcribed by the Utah Historical

Society." But nowhere is the reader told how many women were interviewed, let alone how they were chosen or what format was used. The nineteenth-century material is based almost entirely on a handful of secondary accounts. Her selection and use of these sources is superficial. She quotes Jean Bickmore White's article on Utah's first female legislators, for example, but ignores her later work on the suffrage movement, perhaps because it undercuts her own argument that Utah's suffragists were mere "pawns" in the hands of the priesthood.

Far more serious is her misuse of Michael Quinn's dissertation. On page 146, in her discussion of nineteenth-century polygamy, she writes:

The emphasis was on procreation, because the Latter-day Saints intended to build a mighty nation on earth and in the eternal world. According to Dennis Michael Quinn's study entitled *The Mormon Hierarchy, 1832–1932: An American Elite*, "religion was the pretext, power was the motive."

What Quinn actually said was that when the *federal government* attacked the Mormon church through legislation, "polygamy was the pretext, but power was the motive." Superficial reading and sloppy notetaking, rather than blatant distortion, were perhaps the problems here. But the result is no less shoddy.

Warenski's two major sources for an understanding of Mormon doctrine are Sterling McMurrin and Rodney Turner. The scriptures elude her, which is regrettable because they might have saved her the embarrassment of chapter nine, "Unmarried In A Married Church," which laments the exclusion of single women from the celestial kingdom, as if *men* weren't the chief target of Doctrine & Covenants 131.

For Warenski, politics is a matter of counting heads. Since there are no females among the apostles, women are mere pawns. Equally simplistic is her understanding of historical change, which is brought about in her mind only by mass meetings or fiat. This is why she finds the daily struggles of the Saints so puzzling, and the writings of Mormon "feminists" so bland. Warenski is no more tuned to subtlety than Phyllis Schlafly, and no more interested in scholarly inquiry. Like the strident Latter-

day Saints who group "ERA, abortion and homosexuality" in one catalog of sins, she knows what she knows. The Mormon women who became defensive in her interviews may have been imposing self-censorship. On the other hand, they may simply have been wary of popping out of one slot only to be crammed into another.

*Patriarchs and Politics* is a shallow book, but it raises important questions. We have given too little attention to the gender distribution of authority in the kingdom. But a rigorous analysis of the problem must include not just the priesthood councils, which exclude females, but all those other organizations and committees, at all levels, which include them. What happens when authority is shared, as presumably it is in the Mutual? What is the relationship between the auxiliaries and the priesthood—not just on an organizational chart but in reality? How do women function on ward councils? On the general correlation committee? What is the impact of their virtual isolation from the Mormon "civil service," including the church building department, the social services department and the seminaries and institutes? In the realm of publications, are the needs of women better

served by integration (*The Ensign*) or by independence (*The Relief Society Magazine*)? In missionary work, can the Church continue to "lengthen its stride" while ignoring the services of young women? Mormon theories of family life stress both specialization of function and shared decision-making. How are these sometimes conflicting modes reflected in the church structure? Can they continue to coexist?

A serious analysis of the "plight" of Mormon women must look at their options, not only in relation to men in the Church but in relation to both men and women outside. *Specifically* where are the gaps? Are they shrinking or expanding? What are their sources? But above all, it must listen to the women themselves, not only to those who feel squashed, but to those who find their lives enriched, uplifted and sustained by the programs and teachings of the church. How do they differ from their disaffected sisters? What problems and conflicts do they share?

It is easy to dismiss a flashy book written by a lapsed believer, especially when it couples self-justification with a good dose of the truth. Faithful Mormons should not reject *Patriarchs and Politics* without feeling some responsibility to provide better answers of their own.

## *Out of Another Best Book*

*The Joy of Reading—An LDS Family Anthology*. Edited by Robert K. Thomas, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1978. xii + 181 pp., biblio. \$4.95.

*Reviewed by Gordon Allred, professor of English at Weber State College.*

Latter-day Saints are fond of quoting a scripture from the *Doctrine and Covenants* that reads, "Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom"—an injunction repeated with minor variation at least four times. All too often, however, as with certain other scriptural imperatives, many of us find the recitation easier than the application. To quote the redoubtable Pioneer-Prophet Brigham Young on the matter of counsel in a somewhat different context, "Yes, you

were a great deal more willing to take it than to obey it."

We neglect reading for various reasons. In part from what may be a rather narrow interpretation of the phrase "best books"—those best books, in short, being limited primarily to the standard works and certain writings of the General Authorities. They derive, as well, from an understandable and in some ways healthy suspicion regarding the focus of much contemporary literature (amoral, hedonistic, ultimately despairing). And frankly many active Church members simply do not have the time to read much of what they might like to read.

In the face of these obstacles, *The Joy of Reading—an LDS Family Anthology*, compiled and edited by Robert K. Thomas, may strike that forlorn note of the voice crying