Mormon experiences during the Nauvoo period and the "Americanization" of Utah demonstrate the perplexing problems of reconciling individual moral responsibility with social obligation. The history of Christianity itself documents the endless search for conclusive guidance on political ethics. While no consensus exists among Christians on the appropriate use of violence, McGovern also demonstrates that political violence is not a necessary aspect of Marxist social analysis. McGovern's discussions while not offering definitive ethical solutions to contemporary social problems, do provide an adequate starting point for serious moral reflection.

McGovern accurately captures the essence of "liberation theology" and other Latin American movements which claim to embody a successful Marxist-Christian alliance. Theologians of liberation, for example invoke scriptural authority to support their call for liberating the poor and oppressed. Yet they note the lack of analytical perspectives in the scriptures which would help them assess the origins of and the solutions to modern social problems. Hence they combine Marxist social analysis with basic Christian values. McGovern effectively critiques this alliance.

The distinction between Marxist social analysis and Communist ideology is crucial for McGovern, a distinction effectively displayed throughout the book. As a faithful Christian, he finds a holistic social analysis beneficial in the pursuit of a more just society, hence the necessity for public policies which lead to a form of "democratic socialism." (cf. early Mormon attempts to establish a "United Order.")

In conclusion, *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* offers generally well-thought out and fairly effective arguments, only a small number of which have been alluded to above. At the very least, McGovern's work provides an introduction to Marxist thought from Marx to the present, to the major issues confronting a successful Marxist-Christian dialogue, to recent Marxist-Christian alliances in Latin America, and to the possibility that Christians could employ Marxist social analysis in the United States.

The perceptive Mormon reader may recognize that contemporary Marxist analyses of industrial and developing societies resemble those of nineteenth-century Mormon assessments of American society. Hence a ground of commonality may exist between Marxists and Mormons as both become aware of and struggle with modern problems of social injustice.

Cultural Reflections

The Culture of Narcissism by Christopher Lasch, New York, New York: WW Norton and Company., Inc., 1978, 268 pp., $11.95.

Reviewed by L. Marlene Payne, a child psychiatrist practicing in Virginia.

THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM is the product of an American historian who has borrowed a psychiatric syndrome to examine issues and to synthesize a picture of our culture. Narcissism, an ancient term with roots in Green mythology, can trace its current psychiatric significance to Freud who distinguished the primary, healthy narcissism of the newborn from the secondary, pathological narcissism of those whose earliest relationships had gone awry. Recent psychiatric theorists, most prominently Heinz Kohut, have greatly expanded our understanding of the narcissistic personality, a personality produced in a climate of indulgence combined with faulty empathic responses to the child's emotional needs. The child, highly valued as an extension of the parent, may be used to bolster the parents' self-esteem but is not valued for himself. This results in a person who has both low self-esteem

and a sense of superiority, one who idealizes some people while devaluing others. Relationships are shallow; the person is self-absorbed; life is impoverished because nothing beyond oneself seems worth one's interest. There is a sense of inner emptiness, depression, and anxiety. This narcissistic personality ranges from severely impaired to relatively healthy.

Lasch sees our current society as intensely narcissistic. Narcissism becomes the mode of success in the business world as the corporate executive exchanges the tools of concrete achievement for a successful image and the ability to manipulate the feelings of others. The media has made the public intensely aware of the image of success, of celebrity (i.e., visibility) rather than fame through personal achievement or character traits. In the theater, themes of emptiness and absurdity have replaced earlier "neurotically" conflicting themes of great drama. Politics has also become a spectacle. In sports, cooperation and loyalty among team members and competition against rivals has been replaced by celebrity noncompetitiveness. It is a narcissistic trait to avoid competition and to avoid realistic appraisal of one's abilities in favor of fantasied greatness.

Lasch claims that education has also become contaminated by narcissism as students avoid the difficulty of solid academic training for a potpourri of courses focusing instead on "self-discovery" and self-absorption. Teachers abdicate the role of authority figures to avoid antagonizing students. The result is an alarming "new illiteracy" in which youths prefer the easy entertainment of the media to the struggle of the learning process.

The collapse of school authority is paralleled at home as society assumes family functions in an ever-widening arena. For example, juvenile courts have assumed the right to judge families and take over their functions with children. Lasch feels that child and family therapy and books by experts have made parents less confident. The absence of fathers through divorce or work has led to a collapse of paternal authority and hence an impairment in the development of conscience. The relationship between the sexes has also been invaded by narcissism as people flee intimacy for casual sexual relationships. Because sex brings no emotional commitment and hence no hope for the future, divorce becomes the easy way out.

Final evidence is our culture's attitude toward aging. Wisdom and experience are devalued in favor of youth. The old should find value in life by vicariously enjoying the accomplishments of their children, but narcissistic people are unable to reach beyond themselves in that fashion. We behave like a culture "that believes it has no future."

The strength of these chapters lies in their historical perspective. Lasch gives a fascinating account of the historical development of each theme he elaborates. He values independence, hard work, loyalty to others, respect for the nuclear family, and the authority of parents — values consistent with LDS values. His theory is attractive not only because it brings coherence to many of the problems of contemporary life, but also because it also provides scapegoats: the villains of bureaucracy, the media, and the therapeutic community.

However, his repeated attacks on therapy display a marked lack of understanding of both the process and the goals of psychotherapy. He accuses psychotherapy of exposing the "innermost secrets of the psyche to medical scrutiny," thus encouraging "habits of anxious self-scrutiny . . . rooted in anxiety . . ." and exempting the patient "from critical judgment and . . . moral responsibility." I believe that successful psychotherapy leads not to increased self-absorption (not the same thing as introspection) but to improved understanding of oneself and mature, more caring relationships. An important result of therapy is the improved self-esteem that follows greater independence.

Lasch contends that narcissistic personality disorders are on the rise. Are they? A rise in narcissistic behavior may actually