

mean that society is encouraging the expression and the use of narcissistic traits as a means of success (in business, politics and the media, as Lasch has claimed), thereby making these traits more apparent.

Lasch's villains are bureaucracy, the media and advertising, and therapeutic ideologies which rob the individual of initiative and competence, stimulate an insatiable craving for goods and thrills to fulfill an inner emptiness and invade our personal life as the media bombards us with anxiety-provoking news and as authority figures tell us how to regulate our most intimate relationships. True, the narcissistic personality is formed in the earliest years by one's parents, but it is a simplified view of humanity to think that a parent's capacity for empathy, acceptance, and spontaneous emotional warmth toward one's child could be completely shaped by such outside forces as child guidance books. The process of par-

enting has much less to do with education than with unconscious processes, particularly the identification with one's own parents. It may be true that corporate monoliths increase dependency in the population at large, but even if this is so, it is a long way from saying that they are at the root of an upwelling of narcissistic personality disorders. The point is that it is very difficult to assess and validate causality for something so complex as changing patterns of society.

If one bypasses the question of childhood etiology — the origin of narcissism — and accepts the finding that there is increased expression and acceptance of narcissistic behavior in our society, then one can value this work as an excellent attempt to help us see ourselves and our culture. It reminds the reader to safeguard proper values, to analyze and change those forces in our society which contribute to the problem of narcissism.

## Investigating the Investigation

*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, by Richard Lloyd Anderson. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1981, xv+206 pp. illus.

Reviewed by William D. Russell, chairperson, Division of Social Sciences at Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.

WITH OVER-GENEROUS PORTIONS of direct quotations, Richard Lloyd Anderson presents the reader with statements made by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and statements made by others affirming their good character and the sincerity of their testimony regarding the gold plates. It is thus encyclopedic in its documentation but there is so much repetition in the book that the public might have been better served by a journal article.

Despite his doctorates in history and law, Anderson writes not as a detached historian but as a man of faith, with deep reverence for the eleven witnesses. His argu-

ment is essentially this: the Three Witnesses and some of the Eight Witnesses became disaffected in the late 1830s and spent most or all of the remainder of their lives outside the Church, yet they reaffirmed their testimony regarding the Book of Mormon as long as they lived. Their credibility as witnesses is affirmed by evidence showing that they were well respected in their communities, even though those communities were anti-Mormon and their former Mormon connections were known. Anderson suggests it would have been in their self-interest to renounce their original testimony. Since they did not, he concludes that the miraculous events they attested to literally happened.

However, all he really demonstrates is that the witnesses were known by their non-Mormon neighbors as honest men and that they reaffirmed their original position to the end. But it requires a "leap of faith" to reach the conclusion Anderson seems to

desire: that the plates actually existed and were the ancient record which the Book of Mormon claims to be. Alternative explanations — such as various psychological possibilities — are occasionally mentioned briefly but never seriously examined. For example, he fails to probe possible psychological implications of the fact that Cowdery, Whitmer, and Harris had an “overwhelming desire” (p. 52) to be among the three witnesses anticipated to meet the requirements of Deuteronomy 19:15. The hypnosis hypothesis is brushed aside because persons hypnotized “are normally aware of entering such a process” (p. 188). But he does not deal with the possibility that they were not aware they were hypnotized.

All of the departing witnesses had nearly a decade of active membership before leaving the Church. This gave them plenty of time to retell their story on so many occasions to so many people that the testimony would have been embedded in their minds and they would not likely change their story later. Anderson makes much of their reputation for honesty, but the witnesses could hardly fail to realize that to renounce their testimony would damage their credibility. Hiram Page recognized it would be foolish not to stick by his story: “As to the Book of Mormon, it would be doing injustice to myself, and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847” (p. 129). Thus I cannot agree with Anderson that it was contrary to their self-interest — once outside the Church — for them to stick by their story (p. 83). From the evidence Anderson gives us it appears they acted in their best interests when outside the Church: they were not inclined to create opportunities to affirm their testimony, but when asked by others they reaffirmed the position they had been publically committed to for many years.

With regard to Cowdery, Anderson dismisses the possibility of fraud because such an explanation is supposedly inconsistent with his reputation as a “responsible attor-

ney and public servant” (p. 53). But many men of honest reputation have committed fraud. The witnesses’ reputation for honesty is supposed to convince us of the truth of their testimony, but a local lawyer who was a politician involved in a scandal is a source Anderson uses to support Cowdery’s trustworthiness (p. 42). Another evidence of Cowdery’s public good reputation is his narrow loss in a political campaign in which he was attacked for his Mormon background (p. 44). The conclusion is that he must have been well respected to have run so close to the winner. But we are not given the information we need to know whether Cowdery really ran well. What was his party’s strength in the district? Was it an office a Democrat should be expected to win? Did Oliver run ahead of or behind his colleagues on the Democratic ticket? And how did Cowdery respond to those who criticized his Mormon past? Anderson says Cowdery maintained his testimony throughout his life, but he gives us no evidence that he affirmed his testimony during the years he spent as a lawyer-politician outside the fellowship of the Church.

As is characteristic of the “faithful historian,” sources that support Anderson’s thesis are given great weight while those that don’t are explained away. For instance, he too easily brushes aside three troublesome sources without footnoting them or giving the reader sufficient information on the circumstances of each to make a judgment (pp. 57–61). Without footnotes the curious reader will find it difficult to pursue the matter.

The sources Anderson gives greatest credence to are the sources that support the faith. Regrettably, he does not analyze possible bias in these sources. Statements by family members are relied upon a great deal and are deemed excellent sources because family members knew the participants well. But is there no problem of bias? Anderson relies on George Q. Cannon, who “had a remarkable intellect and a great capacity for accurate detail in his personal writing” (p. 60). This is the author who,

in his biography of Joseph Smith in 1888, admitted the "paltry things" were left out of his account of "men of God . . . pure and holy." (See Marvin S. Hill, "The Historiography of Mormonism," *Church History*, Dec. 1959, p. 420).

In his zeal for what he regards as the truth, Anderson makes such questionable statements as: "All scriptures promise the Spirit's seal to those who sincerely hear, reflect, and pray" (p. 186). "Prophets independently substantiate other prophets" (pp. 2-3). "The blunt condemnation of current religions reported by Joseph Smith is a profound mark of credibility when read by the light of past prophets" (p. 2). "The average Latter-day Saint who asked Martin Harris about his testimony was not a naive believer who openly or subtly asked for mere confirmation" (p. 117). "If this vision was real to [Cowdery], there is a burden upon every informed person to face the great probability that the Latter-day Saints have indeed received modern revelation" (p. 53). (But we have no way of knowing whether the vision was real; and even if we did, Cowdery's vision doesn't prove that revelation occurred.) We are told that "early Christians were 'of one heart and of one soul' (Acts 4:32)" despite Paul's fiery rebuttals of Peter's position in Galatians. And finally, it is difficult to understand how Anderson can know that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer had the emotional and intellectual capacity to know whether they had been deceived (pp. 53, 90).

Overstatements abound, such as: "Martin Harris was not surpassed in doubt by Thomas nor in absolute assurance by any apostle" (p. 107). Harris's attitude toward church leaders at the time of his disaffection was "obviously immature" (p. 111). "Through the miracle of modern communication, [David Whitmer's] testimony now transcends a community and confronts a world" (p. 90). Cowdery's first missionary journey is "as spectacular as any of the apostle Paul" (p. 54). Regarding the testimony of the Three Witnesses: "nothing short of biblical Christianity furnishes such

a concrete statement of supernatural reality" (p. 53) and "no testimony of direct revelation in the world's history is better documented than the testimony of the Book of Mormon witnesses" (p. 79).

Some statements are simply irrelevant pieties: "The Bible defender can be the offender, for in jealously guarding his limited collection of prophets, he often opposes more revelation with a few stock quotes" (p. 187). Regarding the witnesses who left the Church: "This is not to justify their very real rebellion against priesthood authority" (p. 128). Cowdery, absent from the church for a decade, would probably not have known some "important things revealed in his absence" (p. 185). Similarly, David Whitmer's rejection of later Mormon doctrinal developments is described as "not advancing beyond the first revelations" (p. 167). Orthodox Mormons regard the later doctrinal developments as improvements. Whitmer, certainly, did not.

We learn that Martin Harris changed his religious position eight times during his disaffection from the Church, but every affiliation was with some Mormon group (p. 111). Then in the same paragraph Anderson contradicts himself by saying that Harris was bound by no Mormon ties during this period.

Perhaps one should not expect that a book about the witnesses to the Book of Mormon published by Deseret Book Company would be anything other than an attempt to strengthen the reader's faith in the Book of Mormon. This book will be convincing to those already certain that the gold plates actually existed and that the eleven witnesses saw them. And even the detached reader will probably be convinced by Anderson's research that the witnesses were honest men who sincerely believed their signed testimony and probably stuck by their story as long as they lived. But Anderson is really trying to have us conclude more than this. He would have the reader be convinced that because these men were honest and reaffirmed their testimony when asked, they actually saw and handled