

especially verses 91–96 regarding the ordination of Hyrum Smith to the office and the linking of the patriarchal calling to the power Christ gave his apostles to bind and loose (Matt. 16:19; 18:18), the authority of a prophet, seer, and revelator (Eph. 4:11–16 and 1 Cor. 12:28–30), and the concept of the restoration of all things support Charles's argument. Moreover, Joseph Smith defined *patriarch* to mean "Evangelist," a term usually associated with the New Testament. (*History of the Church* 3:381) In my view, an interpretation that perceives the early Latter-day Saints as dividing the Old and New Testaments into two traditions is untenable.

My second quibble has to do with the interpretation of what replaced the entire community or the church as the responsible institution for boundary maintenance during and after the early twentieth century transition. Shipp's believes responsibility

was transferred to the individual. It is my view that priesthood authority became the institution for boundary definition. It is not at all surprising that the priesthood reform movement occurred during the period, that the various auxiliaries got priesthood advisors for the first time, that welfare came under priesthood jurisdiction, or that the role of individual prophesying and speaking in tongues was diminished. Moreover, the various measures of activity such as the Word of Wisdom, statistics of attendance, and temple attendance were all priesthood-administered.

These comments should not, however, be taken as anything more than disagreements over interpretation. I do not question the substance, importance, or brilliance of Shipp's contribution. Her work will remain for some time as the standard against which scholars measure interpretations of the Mormon past.

## The Benefits of Partisanship

*Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* by Richard L. Bushman (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 262 pp.

Reviewed by Dean C. Jessee, research historian, Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History, Brigham Young University.

DURING THE 1970s a comprehensive history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in sixteen volumes was contemplated as one of the projects of the Historical Department of the Church, with Leonard J. Arrington, then Church Historian, as general editor, and Deseret Book Company as publisher. Although the format for editing and publishing this monumental work has changed, volumes once intended for the series have begun to appear. Milton Backman's *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio* was the first; now comes Richard L. Bush-

man's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*.

A noted scholar of American history and a skilled interpreter of early New England life, Bushman brings impressive credentials to the task of writing on Joseph Smith and the beginnings of Mormonism.

This book, one of several works on Mormonism recently produced by the University of Illinois press, covers the period of Mormon beginnings up to 1831. It is an attractively designed work printed on quality, acid-free paper. It contains two informative maps and one additional illustration: William Whiaker's painting of Joseph Smith. Extensive notes giving considerable insight to the text are placed at the back of the book but are easily located with numbered page headings.

Bushman acknowledges his pro-Mormon bias but suggests that "partisanship has its benefits too," the most important being "the industry and thoroughness of research-

ers on Mormon topics simply because more than the satisfaction of curiosity is at issue. Thanks to the intensity of the students of Mormonism, we know more about the Joseph Smith, Sr., family than any other poor farmers of the nineteenth century" (p. 189).

The purpose of Bushman's volume was not to trace the origin of all "the images, ideas, language, and emotional structure" of Mormonism, but rather to "narrate what happened as Mormonism came into being in the early nineteenth century." Faced with the task of communicating transcendent religious experiences to a general audience, Bushman's method was "to relate events as the participants themselves experienced them, using their own words where possible," and insofar as divine revelation was a reality to them, treating it as reality in his narrative (p. 3). Within this framework he has produced a sympathetic, scholarly treatment—appealing to Latter-day Saints and informative to readers of diverse viewpoints.

Bushman packages the world of Mormon beginnings in six chapters. Adding his own expertise to the previous work of Richard Anderson, Milton Backman, Marvin Hill, Francis Kirkham, Larry Porter, and Jan Shippo, he focuses upon the Smith family background, Joseph's early visions, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the founding of the Church, and concludes with a definition of Mormonism at the advent of the move to Ohio.

Beside dealing with the traditional events of the time period, the author does not ignore obscure and difficult issues. He seeks to "recognize the unusual as well as the common in Joseph Smith's early work, to tell how Mormonism unloosed itself from its immediate locale . . . and to portray as accurately as possible what it had become by the time the Prophet, his family, and his followers left New York for Ohio early in 1831" (p. 8). Bushman's understanding of the social setting in which the Smith family lived and moved adds broad new understanding to the time period.

For instance, by placing Joseph Smith in the "turbulence of a contested cultural boundary" that divided superstition from rational belief, Bushman launches insightfully into the mystic world of seerstones and treasure hunting that is so foreign to present experience, yet essential to the discussion of Joseph Smith's life. He defines the conflict between Joseph and his neighbors as a conflict between traditional Christian and Enlightenment values; he notes that "culturally Joseph looked backward toward traditional society's faith in the immediate presence of divine power, communicating through stones, visions, dreams, and angels," but on the other hand Joseph "repudiated the superstitions of the past, particularly the Palmyra money diggers' exploitation of supernatural power for base purposes. In the end he satisfied neither religionists nor the local magicians" (p. 79).

Bushman cites evidence that by the mid-1820s Joseph was known for his ability to see in a stone; that he regarded his ability as a gift from God; that he was reluctant to use his gift to hunt for treasure; and that during the process of extricating himself from association with local money diggers he incurred their wrath—which explains some of the violence heaped upon the Smiths during their sojourn in New York.

Bushman places the appearance of Peter, James, and John to Joseph Smith in an August 1830 context rather than the traditional 1829. As evidence he cites two second- and third-hand fifty-year recollections. Granted, as he indicates, that additional information is necessary to completely clear up the dating of this event, there is a question whether the evidence for the 1830 date is compelling enough to warrant the abandonment of the traditional date.

In Chapter 4 Bushman evaluates non-Mormon explanations for the origin of the Book of Mormon. In considering the environmentalist theory current in the twentieth century, which is that Joseph absorbed images, attitudes, and conceptions from

upstate New York culture and wove them into the Book of Mormon story, the author deals with anti-Masonry, Republicanism, and Ethan Smith but does not address archeological questions; the issue of the presence of Christian terminology, practices, and institutions in what is presumed to be a pre-Christian setting; and the phenomenon of automatic writing.

Textual flaws are few; I have noted less than a dozen typographical errors. Reference to Marlow, "a southern New Hampshire town just west of the Connecticut River," (p. 13) does not agree with the map; and in light of the evidence that the

work titled *Defence in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints*, attributed to Oliver Cowdery, is a nineteenth-century anti-Mormon hoax, its use is questionable.

In an area of history where the sources are highly complex and contradictory, Richard Bushman has made a profound contribution to the understanding of Mormonism at its most critical juncture. Written with style and felicity, a product of Bushman's superb analytical powers, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* is a major work in Mormon historiography.

## To Sustain the Heart

*Preface to Faith: A Philosophical Inquiry into RLDS Beliefs* by Paul M. Edwards. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1984.

Reviewed by Sterling M. McMurrin, professor of history at the University of Utah and author of *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965).

PAUL EDWARDS is a man of uncommon talents, generously endowed with wit and wisdom, who possesses his share of good sense and good will and justifiably enjoys the confidence and esteem of his colleagues and friends. As the intellectual leader of the Reorganized LDS Church, he has obviously done much to shape its current thought and attitude. Not the least of his credits is his influence in the effort to overcome the mutual animosity which has plagued the LDS and RLDS churches for more than a century, a positive movement toward a better understanding and sympathetic concern that is one of the best things that has happened in Mormondom in recent decades.

*Preface to Faith* is not simply an exposition of the philosophical foundations of RLDS beliefs, though it is highly informa-

tive. It is, rather, an essay on the philosophy of religion that, while critically assessing those beliefs, expresses Edwards's personal thought on fundamental issues while he seeks and probes for ideas that might function normatively in the doctrine of his church. I have the impression that this is not a simple task for him, for he seems to find considerable ambiguity and lack of consistency and perhaps even some contradiction in the accepted beliefs of the Church. It is perhaps fair to say that Edwards's work is almost a pioneering effort in defining and systematizing the basic ingredients of RLDS philosophy. In his preface he says, "As the RLDS Church becomes increasingly involved in the lives of people outside the Western world, we find cultural differences that make communication difficult. As we try to tell them our story, we naturally fall back on basic concepts—only to discover that the unspoken assumptions in which our beliefs are rooted are unexamined and undefined" (p. xi). If this is indeed the case, Edwards's book is no doubt overdue, for the strength of a theology depends on its philosophical foundation; and in a society that places a high value on reason and rationality, theology is of major importance to religion.