

ward. Each has considerable merit, but none will change many critical minds who champion a need for creative historical analysis rather than narrative description. However, their efforts deserve a close reading. I was most excited by two essays about women in the Church. Carol Cornwall Madsen's "Schism in the Sisterhood: Mormon Women and Partisan Politics, 1890-1900" and Jill Mulvay Derr's "Changing Relief Society Charity to Make Way for Welfare, 1930-1944" make significant contributions and fit well together in this collection since Arrington championed women's issues and history. The political and social welfare contributions of Mor-

mon women were and are tremendous. These essays certainly paint an alternative picture to the stereotype of homebound, downtrodden Mormon women.

In the final analysis, this collection of essays adds significantly to Mormon historiography. While the viewpoints are not necessarily new or intended to revise earlier preconceptions, the essays are good history, and they do service to the mentor and colleague honored. They illustrate a continuing need for a complete and open analysis of the Mormon historical experience. Until the Church overcomes its fear of history, we must view the Arrington period as a mirage, so near, yet so far.

A Celebration of Diversity

A Heritage of Faith: Talks Selected from BYU Women's Conferences, edited by Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 191 pp., index, \$10.95.

Reviewed by Helen Cannon, a teacher in the English department at Utah State University.

IN 1986 DESERET BOOK published an anthology of talks selected from BYU women's conferences. That collection, *Woman to Woman*, as the title suggests, included talks exclusively by Church women. Now, a 1988 anthology includes both male and female voices.

That is one difference in the two collections. Another is that, while *Woman to Woman* listed no editor, *A Heritage of Faith* credits two competent ones, Mary E. Stovall and Carol Cornwall Madsen, who have selected and arranged the talks (from 1985, 1986, and 1987 women's conferences) thematically under the headings, "Seeking Spirituality," "Coping with Hard Realities," "Inspiration from the Past," "Women in an International Church," and "Individuality and Community." Though the talks probably were not originally written to

those assigned themes, they fit nicely under the headings now.

Stovall and Madsen have gathered here a balance of the bold and the conventional, of the provocative and the familiar. Consider, for instance, ninety-year-old Camilla Eyring Kimball's candid view of old age as "a time of dependency on others after a lifetime of being self-sufficient," a comment she immediately tempers with the reassurance that old age can hold the "satisfaction of enduring to the end by being faithful to important values in life" (p. 4). In a similar balance, she notes dangers of learning, while fondly relating her lifelong love of study and teaching. Citing 2 Nephi 9:28-29, Sister Kimball concludes "that learning has its risks. But on the other hand, ignorance has its risks too—just a different set" (p. 8).

Patricia Terry Holland takes a hard look at the complexity of women's concerns and cautions against the Paula-Perfect Syndrome of being "caught in the crunch of trying to be superhuman instead of realistically striving" (p. 12). From experience she counsels for a "stilling of the center," for an "acceptance of diversity," and for faith in a Mother in Heaven. This section

also includes talks by Dallin H. Oaks and Carolyn J. Rasmus.

In the section "Coping with Hard Realities," besides Francine R. Bennion's scriptural, philosophical understanding of suffering as applied to our own lives and Deanne Francis' behavioral, psychological exploration of the charted phases of grief, we additionally find two very specific looks at "Hard Realities" for women within the Church: women as affected by divorce laws, presented and analyzed by lawyer Stephen J. Bahr, and Anne L. Horton's candid sociological discussion of child and spouse abuse within the Church. Her challenge for us is to understand as well as to eliminate this problem in our midst.

The third section, "Inspiration from the Past," has only two selections, one by Carol Cornwall Madsen, and the other a joint paper by Harriet Horne Arrington and Leonard J. Arrington. These are both strong and relevant historical portraits suggesting that when we feel inclined to congratulate ourselves, assuming Church women have "come a long way," perhaps, in the light of crusades and achievements by our nineteenth-century sisters, our own strides are often tentative and even mincing.

In terms of boldness and relevance, perhaps talks in the section "Women in an International Church" would win the prizes. Betty Ventura, Val D. MacMurray, and John P. Hawkins speak from experience and training on the necessity to move beyond insular, provincial concepts of the Church. Noting cultural differences as well as a need for gospel unity, Ventura discusses certain cultural barriers that are controllable if "humanizing" principles, rather than programs, schedules, and, what she calls "Americana," are allowed to govern. What we want to achieve, she says, is "not a melting pot," but rather, "a mosaic" (p. 145).

Virginia Woolf, in her classic *A Room of One's Own*, imagines Shakespeare to have had a wonderfully gifted sister—a sister bent on writing. Though as adventurous and ambitious as her brother

Will, whenever sister Judith picked up a book, she was told to "mend the stocking or mind the stew," and when yearning for theatre, was told to marry the first man who would put a ring on her finger. In a similar vein, Val MacMurray imagines how it would be for his seventeen-year-old daughter Heidi to have been born a third-world child. How would she function in the Church—or in the world even? Would she have lived to celebrate that seventeenth birthday? Would she have had chances to learn, or to marry, or to have children of her own? How might the gospel enhance, and even save, his "Third-World Heidi's" life? How must the Church change to properly encompass these Heidis?

John P. Hawkins looks at behavioral differences in a world-wide Church and concludes "because behavior says things, I believe that we, as Mormons, must abandon the adherence to precise patterned behavior as a definition of Mormonness. . . . Procedural uniformity may make members comfortable when they travel about the Church, but it tends to make many local Saints uncomfortable" (p. 167).

Finally, Karen Lynn Davidson and Louise Plummer look at how it is possible to remain individual within a generally conforming society. Davidson concludes that "we do not all need to be the same. Sameness is one of the false premises of peer pressure. One of the most important things we come to learn as adult women is that two profoundly different people may both be fine, devoted members of the Church" (p. 183). Then humorously, Louise Plummer asserts the same necessity—the need for diversity. Just because her mother is a prudent, prepared "ant" doesn't mean that the Church—or the world—has no need for herself as a "grasshopper." Rewriting the end of the fable of the grasshopper and the ants, Plummer has the ants coming to the grasshopper in all their preparedness and saying, "We are bored to death. Won't you tell us a story, or at least a good joke?" The grasshopper consents, and when asked where she gets

all of her good ideas, she replies, "They come to me while I'm taking long hot baths" (pp. 190-91).

The collection has come full circle, then, back to Pat Holland's earlier realization that until she told herself it was all right *not* to sew, she had to suppress the

urge to tear out all the handsewn pleats in the pinafores of six little girls, trouping ahead of their mother down the church aisle, the mother in her own handsewn immaculate outfit.

The diversity of voices in *A Heritage of Faith* in itself speaks in favor of diversity.

BRIEF NOTICES

A Small Light in the Darkness and Other Stories by Jack Weyland. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987, 202 pp., \$9.95.

A COLLECTION OF SIXTEEN STORIES by this popular Mormon adolescent fiction writer, most have been reprinted from the *New Era* or are scheduled for publication therein. With humor and a genial style these stories illustrate contemporary concerns of teenage Mormons, notably outside the Wasatch Front. The young characters face inner temptations against integrity, sexual morality, and keeping the Word of Wisdom; they are challenged by others' indifference, prejudice, and hostility toward their religious beliefs. While battle lines between Mormons and "the world" are clearly drawn, the characterizations of Mormon youth are vivid and clever, and there are many twists in what could be predictable formula fiction.

A Love That Endures by Barbara Elliott Snedecor (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1987), 132 pp., \$7.95.

CHRISTIANA SADLER has, at age twenty-one, moved from the family farm in Idaho to, not Rexburg, not even Utah, but New York City—seeking a career in writing. Her previous successes at BYU did not prepare her, she finds, for the competitive business world of New York; her naivete, it seems, carries her through an otherwise hostile environment. As she tells her story, however, it becomes clear that this coming

of age story has more to offer than Chris's romance with her Jewish architect friend, David; more than a handsome, spurned Mormon suitor; and more than simple success or failure in her writing career. This story weaves together the underlying strength of family support, the uncertainty of living alone, and the self-discovery of a year-long chapter in a young woman's life. Snedecor's first novel, at first glance suited for the romantic fiction market, is in fact a graceful and reflective work, with serious questions and no simple answers.

Ezra Taft Benson: A Biography by Sheri L. Dew (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 565 pp., index, notes, \$17.95.

A DETAILED AND ANNOTATED BIOGRAPHY of the thirteenth president of the LDS Church by the former editor of *This People* magazine, this book is readable, accessible, and informative. With access to many sources—Benson's personal journals, family records, journals, and interviews, published and unpublished writings, speeches, and interviews with other General Authorities—Dew has traced Ezra Taft Benson's life from farm beginnings to his government work, national farm cooperative positions, and as a cabinet member under Eisenhower and apostle of the Church. While the research was seemingly exhaustive, the author comments of her work, "As Nephi explained in his writing, I have not told everything, but what I have told is true" (p. ix), suggesting a noncritical approach to the work.