

The note for 1 Nephi 10:3 indicates that "yea" is meant, but the contributors choose "ye" for the text because the OED lists it as an archaic variant of "yea" (1:43, n. 356). Notes for Mosiah 29:33 and Alma 18:37 indicate that "travails" is meant, but they choose "travels" for the text because the OED lists it as a variant of "travails" (2:513, n. 1230; 2:640, n. 57). They let Mormon 5:23 read "the earth shall be rolled together as a scrawl" because the OED lists "scrawl" as a variant of "scroll" (3:1163, n. 121).

The textual apparatus is particularly unhelpful in the portions of 1 and 2 Nephi paralleling Isaiah and 3 Nephi paralleling Matthew. There are many passages that are *almost* verbatim, but that *almost* is

important. Rather than writing out the Matthean parallel so the reader can see where the differences are, the notes give the chapter and verse numbers for that parallel, then write out the text of other less similar parallels.

Faults aside, this critical text is a truly valuable "Tool for Scholarly Reference." I used it as the basic text for my most recent Book of Mormon research, and I will probably find that its information can enhance each future Book of Mormon project I do. Scholars who need to be aware of textual changes or scriptural parallels will find it an essential reference. The F.A.R.M.S. team can be proud of their contribution.

The RLDS Conference

The Conferring Church by M. Richard Troeh and Marjorie Troeh (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1987), 232 pp., \$10.00.

Reviewed by Gary Shepherd, associate professor of sociology at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, and co-author (with brother, Gordon) of *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press, 1984).

BY THE 1850s, general conferences of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had evolved from internal organizational meetings into inspirational gatherings in which General Authorities taught, exhorted, admonished, and defended the Mormon people. This ideological emphasis has characterized conference proceedings ever since. In contrast, general conferences of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints have retained much of the governance and business essence of original Mormon conferences (which in turn were based on a general Protestant model). While the structure and func-

tioning of modern RLDS conferences have become increasingly complex (and do include some "evening preaching" by General Officers), the major official purposes are to design and approve the church's operating budget, legislate new programs, sustain General Officers, and accept new revelation that may be presented by the president of the church.

In *The Conferring Church*, Richard and Marjorie Troeh present a detailed description of the RLDS conference process. This is not a scholarly analysis; it is a quasi handbook for conference delegates and an explanatory guide for RLDS church members based on a course taught by the authors in their home congregation. The Troehs have organized their clearly written material in a coherent and systematic textbook manner. Given their primary audience and objectives, we might expect the Troehs to present an idealized version of conference proceedings and functioning, which in fact they often do. For instance, they make little mention of contemporary difficulties; most notable is their silence about the controversial 1984 conference which, amid schismatic rumblings from opponents, finally

approved the ordination of women to the priesthood. At the same time, we see a fair amount of candor about certain human shortcomings associated with conferences, especially considering that this book was ultimately reviewed by the First Presidency of the RLDS Church.

A glorified church manual, no matter how well written, would not ordinarily be the subject of a *DIALOGUE* review. In this case, however, the Troehs' book may be used by both Mormons and interested outsiders to compare several key divergences between the RLDS and LDS churches. Most of these differences revolve around the tendency in RLDS thought and organization toward greater liberalization. After reading this account, it is apparent that Mark Leone's characterization of Mormonism as a "modern religion" — emphasizing individualism, changeability, relativism, and adaptability — might be better applied to the RLDS than the LDS church (see Mark Leone, *Roots of Modern Mormonism* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979]).

One specific illustration of this difference is the degree to which members are meaningfully involved in establishing churchwide policies. The majority of LDS readers will probably be most struck by the Troehs' portrayal of institutional revelation. The RLDS Church takes quite seriously the notion of "theocratic democracy" and regards its biennial world conference as the prime instrument through which ordinary members actively participate in the "prophetic mission" of the Church. The prophet may not always present a revelation to the conference. But when he does, the approximately 2800 elected delegates are expected, in prayerful but parliamentary fashion, to deliberate upon the merits of the prophet's written revelation and then vote to accept or reject this document as expressing God's will for the church. The prophet may amend his revelatory statement should a majority of delegates be dissatisfied with some portion of it. The conference, as a church body, thus becomes

the ultimate community interpreter of divine disclosure — a kind of complementary partner to the prophet in the revelatory process.

The conference also serves another corporate "prophetic" function through its broader legislative activities, especially those involving allocation of funds. Funded programs become priorities and presumably reflect a unified understanding of purpose, at a given time, about the church's "divine mission" in the world. The conference not only shapes and gives its blessings to new programs but also reviews budgetary expenditures of the previous two years to ensure that the directives of the last conference have been appropriately followed.

An unusual amount of both revelational flexibility and hierarchical restraint is evident in these and other conference functions described by the Troehs. As teachers of conference tradition and procedures to prospective delegates and the laity at large, the Troehs advocate these functions within a classic liberal theology of change. According to them, the role of the conference in expressing the "common consent" of members should be achieved by "prayerful involvement in the process of interpreting those truths already given (and even reinterpreting them from time to time) as life situations change" (p. 64). The most obvious situational factor recognized by RLDS conferences in recent decades is the diversity of cultures into which the church has expanded. The Troehs encourage those conference actions which "reflect [the] worldwide nature of the church and an understanding of their possible meanings in different cultures" (p. 141). They link these expressions of cultural relativism with official conference statements that support ecumenical movements "compatible with our vision of the Kingdom" (p. 96).

Important elements of the RLDS "vision of the Kingdom" are revealed in the structure, functioning, and substance of their biennial world conference, at least as much as in the biannual LDS counterpart. This seems reason enough to recom-

mend the kind of straightforward account produced by the Troehs for a good intro-

ductory grounding in how the RLDS conference system works.

Not Quite a Complete Meal

An Abundant Life: The Memoirs of Hugh B. Brown edited by Edwin B. Firmage (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), xiii, 152 pp., paperback, \$9.95.

Reviewed by Edward L. Kimball, professor of law at J. Reuben Clark Law School, BYU.

LAST NIGHT I HAD PIZZA FOR DINNER. Though I liked the taste, I felt I'd not had quite a complete meal. I also enjoyed *An Abundant Life*, the oral reminiscences of Hugh Brown Brown, a great modern Church leader, but I had the feeling there, too, that something was missing.

At President Brown's suggestion, his grandson Ed Firmage undertook to write his biography and interviewed him during 1969 and 1970. Firmage subsequently became involved in other work, however, and turned the project and the transcripts over to professional historians Eugene E. Campbell and Richard D. Poll, who in 1975 published *Hugh B. Brown: His Life and Thought* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft), just after President Brown's death.

Since that admirable biography of 320 pages told President Brown's life story in much greater detail, using much of the material from these same transcripts, and since the first and last chapters and all but one of the letters included in the memoirs have recently been published separately (see *DIALOGUE* 21 [Summer 1988]: 17-50; *Sunstone* 11 [November 1987]: 7-11), I have to ask: What justifies the separate publication of these raw materials?

I can see four reasons. First, the biography was published thirteen years ago and is now out of print. A new life story, even if not so complete, can introduce readers to this remarkable man.

Second, here President Brown tells his story in his own words. What it therefore

loses in objectivity, it gains in additional insights about the man.

Third, the book preserves many of the strong personal anecdotes Hugh B. Brown used repeatedly in his career as a great public speaker. Examples include his mother's advice to ask, "Father, are you there?" (p. 13); experiences as the victim of misunderstanding (pp. 58, 85-86); calling a cigar smoker as bishop (p. 71); oppression by an evil spirit before being called as a General Authority (pp. 112-13); prophecies of his call (pp. 114-15); and twenty-odd others. This fund of stories will enrich the public speaking of another generation.

Fourth, this book offers some new materials. Hugh B. Brown had lifelong association with Church leaders, and he mentions some of their human frailties in these memoirs. But he had no trouble believing that God works through imperfect men, even imperfect prophets. As a gauge of his own character, he was able to give great men their due without unfairly discounting for their shortcomings. He mentions that one was "very severe in his judgment and very exacting in his demands upon his family" but "loved deeply . . . [and was] very just and fair" (p. 11). Another was at times "self opinionated" and "rather sharp" in business but also "kindly . . . [and] a great leader" (pp. 14-16). One president of the Church offended his counselor by making decisions without consulting him (p. 131). A counselor in the presidency "was a one-man show and very self-confident . . . but he and I were very fond of each other" (p. 132). Another leader brought "tremendous pressure to bear" upon President Brown to concur in a decision, but they later became reconciled (pp. 142-43). "Although I have had some rather difficult experiences since I became a General Authority by reason of some mis-