

undoubtedly will attract a popular audience: perhaps New Agers looking for some sort of karmic road map for meaning and authenticity they find lacking in their own lives; probably non-Indians who simply want to understand the complex interrelationships of Indian peoples, cosmolo-

gies, and environments; and maybe—as McPherson and the Navajo elders he talked with hope—maybe even Utah Navajo youth looking for a reason and a way to reconsider and perpetuate *Diné* cultural traditions in an increasingly modern and technological world.

Measuring the Measuring Stick

Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion by Philip L. Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 251 pp., select bibliography, index, pictures, \$34.95.

Reviewed by Paul Gutjahr, Ph.D. candidate in the American Studies Program at the University of Iowa.

EVEN WITH THE EXPLOSION of scholarly interest in Mormonism over the past fifteen years, students of American religion still wait for a systematic and synthetic treatment of the development of Mormon theology. Central to such an endeavor would be an analysis of the place and use of the Bible in Mormonism, a topic which has received far too little attention. With considerable success, Philip Barlow's book attempts to correct this deficiency.

Barlow sets out to study Mormon biblical usage by asserting that nothing "captures the evolving but enduring *religious* quintessence of Mormonism and its relationship to the balance of American religion better than a firm, comparative grasp of the Bible's place among the Latter-day Saints" (p. xi). He goes about his analysis by focusing on a series of key individuals "who have had particular impact on Mormon scriptural conceptions and who have themselves reflected major LDS tendencies" (p. xiii). Barlow is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his approach. While examining key figures gives a focus to his study, his analysis does not explore issues of ethnicity, nativity, class, or gender.

Barlow begins his study by discussing the place of the Bible in antebellum culture, then examines Mormonism's use of

the Bible from 1820 to 1844 by turning to the prophet Joseph Smith. For the second half of the nineteenth century, he looks at Brigham Young and Orson Pratt. Moving into the twentieth century, Barlow focuses next on higher criticism and Mormonism, looking at B. H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, and William H. Chamberlain, then completes his study with Bruce R. McConkie, Lowell L. Bennion, and the Bible in contemporary Mormon culture.

Barlow makes a forceful case for biblical interpretation being a more flexible and dynamic process in early Mormonism when Smith, Young, and Pratt exercised what he calls "a selective literalism" (p. 32). What set Mormons apart—as exemplified by these leaders—was their ability to select which parts of the Bible they would take literally. They chose to determine God's truth not only by turning to the Bible, but by looking at other forms of both written and oral revelation. Smith, Young, and Pratt had deep misgivings about the ability of human language to capture God's thoughts. Words were too small to convey omniscience. Thus, a more flexible view of scripture and its interpretation were early marks of the Mormon attitude toward the Bible.

Central to Barlow's work is his analysis of the Bible as a measuring stick to help determine the place of the Latter-day Saints in American religion. He argues that Mormons have always been "Bible believers," but their use of the Bible places them somewhere between Timothy Smith's view that Mormons are essentially part of the religious "mainstream" and Jan Shipps' argument that Mormonism rep-