

Mormon Static

Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History. Edited by Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Reviewed by J. Boyer Jarvis, Professor of Communication Emeritus, University of Utah.

IN THEIR INTRODUCTORY ESSAY editors Roger Launius and Linda Thatcher provide an informative overview of the nature of religious dissent, particularly in the history of Mormonism. They note that Joseph Smith, Jr., was himself a dissenter who, soon after he had organized the Mormon church, was obliged to contend with challenges to his authority. As the editors remark, "The irony of the tormenter becoming the tormented, within Mormonism, is too rich to be ignored" (4).

The introductory essay is followed by seventeen separately written accounts of individuals who, in one way or another, disagreed with Joseph Smith or with subsequent authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City) or the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Independence, Missouri). All of the essays included were prepared for original publication in this book.

The first eight essays deal with individuals who were part of the early period of Mormon history, between 1830 and 1844. The names of some of those individuals are well known to most, if not all, present-day Mormons.

David Whitmer, a very important early supporter of Joseph Smith, Jr., and one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, could not support Smith's inclinations to combine governmental and ecclesiastical power.

John Corrill became a prominent church leader in Missouri during the 1830s, but he "would never surrender his private judgment to the authority of prophetic rule" (48).

William E. McLellin was baptized a Mormon at Independence on 20 August 1831 and ordained an elder four days later. Before long he became an antagonist of Joseph Smith in Kirkland and was excommunicated on 3 December 1832. Soon thereafter he was reinstated. In the summer of 1835, after he had become an apostle, he was disfellowshipped but restored on 25 September 1835, "without a clear reconciliation" (79). Finally in 1838 he was excommunicated at Far West, Missouri.

Francis Gladden Bishop, greatly influenced by the religious revivals of the 1820s in western New York, was seventeen when he experienced the first of several important visions. Bishop's revelations soon resulted in doctrinal friction with the prophet Joseph and other church authorities. In the spring of 1842 he was excommunicated by the Nauvoo Stake High Council. In the summer of 1864 he arrived in Salt Lake City and returned to the Mormon church.

James Colin Brewster was a young boy when his parents joined the Mormon church in the early 1830s. He was only ten years old when he "received his inaugural spiritual manifestation" (121). Brewster's revelations were a threat to Joseph Smith's authority, and in November 1837 the high council in Kirkland disfellowshipped him "and any of his followers who would not denounce him" (122).

William B. Smith was an active participant in the founding of the Mormon church. At the age of twenty-three he was ordained an apostle. When his older brothers, Hyrum and Joseph, were killed, he believed he was entitled to assume the patriarchal authority that had been bestowed on his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., and then passed on to his brother Hyrum. On 24 May 1845 Brigham Young ordained William Smith as "Patriarch to the whole church" (144), but opposition from other apostles, especially John Taylor, soon developed, and William Smith stayed behind when the Brighamites migrated to Utah. Eventually William Smith joined the Reorganized church, with which he had an uneasy relationship until his death in 1893.

Alpheus Cutler was an early convert to Mormonism. He became a member of the prophet Joseph's elite inner circle, and after the prophet's death he agreed to follow the leadership of the Council of Twelve Apostles. However, in Iowa in the late 1840s he became engaged in a serious and prolonged dispute with council president Orson Hyde, and in 1851 Cutler was excommunicated.

Stephen Post, an 1835 convert to the Mormon faith, eventually accepted Sidney Rigdon as the rightful successor to Joseph Smith, Jr. As a committed champion of Rigdonite

Mormonism, Post, until his death in 1879, made repeated, obviously unsuccessful, efforts "to sway Joseph Smith III, leader of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to Rigdon's side" (180).

The ninth essay is focused on the family of James and Alice Dove, who "were baptized by William Clayton on July 22, 1849, at Bulwell, Nottingham, England" (197). The Dove family arrived in Salt Lake City in late 1856. Before long they were disappointed with Mormon society, especially polygamy. They were attracted to the reform movement led by Joseph Morris. After Morris was killed in a confrontation with a territorial posse in June 1862, the Doves fled to Nevada and then to California. From their Church of the First Born in San Francisco, the Doves struggled to keep the Morrisite movement alive. By 1910 it had faded away.

The next three essays describe the dissent in Utah of three remarkable individuals who found themselves at odds with the highest Mormon authorities.

Henry W. Lawrence was a successful merchant in Salt Lake City by the early 1860s, and periodically during that decade he accompanied Brigham Young on visits to settlements throughout the territory. Lawrence was a generous supporter of various Mormon church enterprises and one of the founders of ZCMI. In 1869 he joined the Godbeites, and in December of that year he was excommunicated "on a charge of general apostasy" (224).

Frank J. Cannon, son of George Q. Cannon, was a successful journalist who early in 1905, at the age of forty-six, "publicly declared that he no longer believed in the divinity of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (241). Frank J. Cannon was

elected in 1896 as one of Utah's first United States senators, but when his initial two-year term expired in 1898, the Utah legislature refused to reelect him.

Joseph W. Musser, born into a Latter-day Saint home in 1872, at an early age proved to be a faithful, dedicated member of the church. It was his strong belief in plural marriage that resulted in his excommunication by the Granite Stake High Council in 1921.

The last five essays deal with people active in the last half of the twentieth century.

Fawn McKay Brodie's controversial book, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet*, was published in 1945. One year later, on a charge of apostasy, she was excommunicated.

Maurine Whipple is remembered for her 1941 novel, *The Giant Joshua*, which told the story of polygamy and the settlement of St. George in southern Utah. She was disappointed by what she perceived as the unenthusiastic reception of that work and her only other book, *This Is the Place: Utah*, which appeared in 1945.

Richard Price is noteworthy because of his vigorous opposition to recent liberal changes in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. An opponent of ordaining

women to the priesthood, Price now is regarded as "the leading strategist and publicist of Reorganization fundamentalism" (319).

Jerald and Sandra Tanner, both reared in Mormon families, have been dedicated for more than thirty years to exposing and trying to destroy Mormonism. They have reprinted and made generally available many basic Mormon documents that were out of print, thus helping to stimulate the professional historical examination of a variety of Mormon subjects.

Sonia Johnson, as a result of her leadership of Mormons for the Equal Rights Amendment and her criticism of official Mormon church opposition to the ERA, gained national notoriety when she was excommunicated by a bishop's court at Oakton, Virginia, on 5 December 1979. Today she lives in a small community of women near Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Each of the seventeen essays is scholarly and interesting. For some readers, some of the essays may be more informative than others.

A few proofreading errors may be noticed in this otherwise well-edited book. For example, on page 313 the word "immorality" appears in a context which seems to call for the word "immortality."

A Western with Gray Hats

A Ram in the Thicket: The Story of a Roaming Homesteader Family on the Mormon Frontier. By Frank C. Robertson (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1994).

Reviewed by Ross Geddes, who works for the Department of Defense in Brisbane, Australia.

MY INTRODUCTION TO FRANK C. Robertson was at the age of eleven