

The Kane journal offers revealing insight into Mormonism of the 1870s. It is a quick and interesting read made more useful by helpful notes. There are, however, two minor errors observed in the notes. The first is an apparent misprint which has William Hickman dying in 1833 (139), when he actually died in August 1883. The second identifies Augustus P. Hardy as a founding father of Harmony, Utah

(91). This is a stretch since Harmony, the first settlement in Washington County, was founded in 1852. Hardy arrived in 1854 and spent just over two months there before going to preach to Native Americans near the Virgin River. Nevertheless, those interested in gentle impressions of Mormons, in southern Utah history, or in early Mormon village life will find this work illuminating and valuable.

How the History Is Told

My Best for the Kingdom: History and Autobiography of John Lowe Butler, A Mormon Frontiersman. By William G. Hartley (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1993).

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"WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT prettify me!" This declaration by Walt Whitman to his friend and biographer, Horace Traubel, might have also been in William Hartley's mind as he finished writing an in-depth history of John Lowe Butler (1808-60) based, to some extent, on Butler's autobiography, but even more upon a wealth of historical data culled from years of research. Although Butler had written his autobiography at the end of his life primarily as a selective and highly focussed testament to his family about his conversion and commitment to the LDS church, Hartley's history does not exalt or mythologize Butler, but presents him to us more comprehensively and (within his cultural, political, and social milieu) as a flawed but

faithful Mormon frontiersman and ecclesiastical leader.

My Best for the Kingdom is not hagiography but a "scholarly treatment" (xi) of early LDS history; though Hartley writes about Butler's life and times, he is often more concerned with the times than the life. The result then is not simply a Butler-centered history, but a revisionist LDS church history as well.

Butler was an early convert to Mormonism "in revival torn central Kentucky" (xi). Though never a charismatic church leader, he was nevertheless a militiaman, missionary, polygamist, and bishop. Six feet two-and-one-half inches tall, stout, with blond hair and blue eyes, Butler described himself as a frontier Samson: "I felt like as if I could handle any two men on the earth" (11).

Surrounded in controversy almost all of his life, Butler was a Danite (one of the sensationalized "Destroying Angels" [41]), an "ordained" bodyguard for the prophet Joseph Smith (120), a member of the misunderstood Emmett expedition and

Miller encampment, and an almost legendary fighter who roughed up ruffians at the Daviess County election in Gallatin (1838) precipitating the Mormon War in Missouri. And toward the end of his life, he was called by President Brigham Young to be a pioneer bishop in Spanish Fork to resolve conflicts and bring a sense of unity within the settlement.

At the end of his life when he knew his health was failing, Butler penned his autobiography, which was later placed on file in the LDS church historical department in Salt Lake City. In 1985 the John Lowe Butler Family Organization contracted with Hartley to produce a biography (x). Hartley wrote a book-length manuscript, then changed his plans when he discussed the project with his colleagues at the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. They agreed with him "that the Butler history and autobiography had such importance for LDS history that it merited scholarly treatment" (xi). Hartley's manuscript then evolved from a biography to an in-depth history in which "80 percent of the autobiography is woven into the narrative" (xi). The result is an informative and thought-provoking history with all of the scholarly trappings.

Although *My Best for the Kingdom* has already been recognized for its excellence by both the Mormon History Association and the Association for Mormon Letters, I am still troubled by the way Hartley narrates the history, particularly by his use of two narrators (one objective and the other introspective), a narrative strategy often used in the novels of Henry James.

In Hartley's history, the main nar-

rator pieces together the chronicle using a reasoned, "objective," and basically linear approach. But another more "introspective" narrator intrudes, at times, into the narrative to editorialize on the historical accuracy of the information being presented by the "objective" narrator. The two narrators may be both projections from Hartley's inner conflicts, the one a writer who loves to tell a story—the other, a historian obsessed with accuracy.

When Hartley is a writer, he can be a gifted prose stylist. In addition to integrating a wide range of historical data into an engaging narrative, Hartley also is often imaginative and descriptive, letting himself see as Butler might have seen: "His eyes must have scanned white sheets of sun-bleached flax drying in the yard, dried yellow-brown tassels of ripe corn, the orange of sweet potatoes and pumpkins, and brilliant reds and yellows of leaves during autumn" (5). Hartley will also occasionally break the rigid chronology, shifting to the present to help readers better conceptualize an area. Describing the Camp Vermillion journey, he writes: "Today's I-29 from Council Bluffs to Sioux City generally follows the route John and Cummings took" (195).

But sometimes the narrator, instead of being helpful, is merely critical, carping at Butler, often undermining his credibility. For example, Hartley reminds readers that Butler "erred in his autobiography" (194). When Hartley writes about Nauvoo, Illinois, he says that Butler "made mistakes when it came to dates" (93). After the murder of Joseph Smith, Hartley writes, with obvious disappointment, that Butler "retold a story that spread through Nauvoo and circulated for decades after the martyrdom but was not true" (131). Hartley