

generalize about a whole group of people based on [limited] examples" (*In His Own Language*, p. 9). Her books would be of greater value had they taken a larger and more diverse sampling; nevertheless, there are many similarities between the various groups studied. Of course Embry was limited in time, funds, and staff, yet her research would be more conclusive had more ethnic branches throughout the U.S. been studied and had a greater effort been made to interview inactive members. We might have more to learn about ethnic wards by interviewing members who have quit than from interviewing those who are still active. To be fair, rather than viewing these limitations as a weakness, we can use her books as a starting point for wider research. *Asian American Mormons* presents 108 case studies, of which 82 subjects lived in Utah, 38 were college students, and all were active members of the church. Of the 108, 23 were from Japan, with an average of about 10 each

from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Laos, Thailand, China, and Cambodia. It is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the observations of ten subjects. We can assume that ethnic congregations outside of Provo, Utah, will have other particularities worth studying. One can only imagine the complexities of ethnically diverse stakes in New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other major cities.

Embry has provided us a great introduction to the intricacies of ethnic congregations in the U.S. Within the limitations she faced, the books are informative and well researched. She provides extensive notes and other bibliographical data for those interested in further reading. She has even studied how other churches have dealt with some of these questions. It is to be hoped that Embry's research will continue and that eventually these important books will be revised and expanded.

Missionaries, Missions, Converts, Cultures

Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle. By Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 504 pp.

Reviewed by David Clark Knowlton, Visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah.

TO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, missionaries are a great unknown. Perhaps the most important agents of social change around the globe, they have competed with scholars whose goal is to understand and appreciate people rather than to change them. As a result, outside of the missiology literature, there is a gap

in social science. We really have little understanding of missionaries. If you add to this the barriers of fantasy and indifference, those Mormon men and women going uniformed, two by two in almost every city are even more mysterious. Meanwhile the corps of 60,000 plus Mormon missionaries outstrips in raw numbers that of every other denomination.

Into this gap sociologists Gary and Gordon Shepherd have walked. They have published a wonderful book, consisting of carefully edited selections from diaries of their own missionary experiences in different parts of Mexico during the sixties. Both men were invet-

erate diarists. This has required them to pick and choose carefully among their experiences in order to create a text that moves smoothly, yet dramatically between its two narrators. To achieve this, they employ subplots, providing counterpoint between the everyday grind, the joys of proselyting, and relationship challenges with missionary companions. They include letters from friends, particularly from one young man attending Stanford who was struggling with his faith, with the idea of going on a mission, and with his affiliation with the church.

The focus of the book is properly on the missionary and the mission as a "machine" which creates many different kinds of Mormons, not least among them the faithful Mormon male who spends his life fulfilling one calling after another for the church. The pseudonymous friend "Chuck Radlow" is, thus, also important to the narrative because, as he comes close to the mission experience, he suffers a crisis of faith and becomes a different kind of Mormon. This is one of the most intimate and gut wrenching portions of the book.

Since both authors are prominent sociologists of religion and of Mormonism with a long trajectory of serious academic work, they bring rigor and substance to the analytical sections introducing text groupings from each major segment of their missions. These introductions form a meta-commentary on the diaries, deploying these in a work of serious social thought. Perhaps the greatest value of these texts, however, is that—even in this highly edited form—they will offer data for comparative analyses of Mormon missionary life and experience.

For the LDS reader, this book will serve as a kind of Rohrschach test, as BYU sociologist Marie Cornwall observed at Sunstone a few years ago. We

will see in these stories what is important in our own relationship to missions. But like good psychological analysis, the *Shepherds* will also help us to understand how the form and structure of the mission relates to our everyday lives and the mythologies we build. They will give us the analytic distance to see and better understand ourselves in their reflective surface.

Some issues within the book beg further thought and should serve as starting points for future thinkers. In what remains of this review, I'll list several:

First, it would be interesting to reflect on the cultural and literary form of the diary. It carries symbolic weight in Mormon circles as one of the books from which we will be judged. A diary is a "testimony" to one's life, to use a weighty Mormon phrase. As a result, one might expect to write of one's accomplishments and progress toward spiritual and eternal goals. But this view exists in a certain tension with the popular understanding of the diary as a place where one unveils one's innermost self, writes one's most intimate feelings. The place in which these understandings dovetail (or fail to dovetail) may well be the place where Mormonism most deeply gets its teeth into us, where it is most deeply written in our souls. It is not an unproblematic space. We might, for instance, ask how diaries serve as instruments of socialization. How do they, as a disciplined and disciplinary practice, help create certain kinds of persons and certain kinds of religious worlds? How, moreover, do they function in relationships of power?

A second important issue underdeveloped in the book is that of gender. Most missionaries are males. The mission as a male and gendered experience is important. I suspect that the dominant forms of masculinity play an im-

portant role in missionary life and in building a hierarchy of difference and evaluation among missionaries. But this cannot be clearly understood unless gender is brought firmly into the analytical frame. Though many missionaries are women, *Mormon Passage* does not consider their experience at all. Meanwhile, it is certainly not a given that, even in some of its most basic aspects, a woman's experience of a mission is the same as a man's. Moreover, what role does gender play in envisioning relationships between missionaries and converts? So pervasive a determinant in other carefully researched areas undoubtedly plays a role here. But how? These, I think, are critical questions.

This leads to another criticism of this very fine book, though it is less a criticism of the work than of Anglo Mormonism. The book takes place in Mexico, but we get very little understanding of Mexican society and culture through the lens of these journals. Clearly the missionaries love many people and are loved in return. And at one point Gordon does tell of being scolded for blindness and a patronizing attitude

toward Mexican missionaries, but because the authors do not tackle such issues in depth, Mexico remains little more than an exotic place in which they spent two years. This relationship between missionaries and converts and missionaries and the cultures in which they serve, a relationship of legitimate caring which nonetheless enables social and cultural blindness, may model a kind of uncomprehending intimacy characteristic of Mormon life in general, love as a relationship of power, discipline, hierarchy. The question is worth looking deeply into.

I see the self-absorption of Anglo Mormon culture as the principal failing of this book and, indeed, as one of the major failings of Mormon studies in general, even if it is explainable in terms of LDS norms and practices. But whatever concerns I've raised about such matters, *Mormon Passage* is an excellent book and a surprisingly good read. It captures the humanity as well as the closure of missionary life, and together, the diaries and letters often have an understated lyrical quality.

Bringing Balance to our Historical Writing

From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet. By Valeen Tippetts Avery (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 368 pp.

Reviewed by William D. Russell,
Professor of Political Science and History,
Graceland University.

DAVID HYRUM SMITH WAS Joseph Smith's last child, born several months after the assassination of his father. He followed

his oldest brother, Joseph Smith III, and his mother, Emma, into the RLDS Church and became a member of the First Presidency. Students of Mormon history should welcome Valeen Tippetts Avery's sensitive biography of the son Joseph never knew.

Avery has consulted virtually all of the primary sources available as well as the most relevant secondary sources. She came to this task well prepared by virtue of her earlier work on Emma—