

the Jacksonian era could easily relate to and understand because it is part of a very American tradition. . . . [I]t radiates revivalist passion, frontier culture and folklore, popular concepts about Indians, and the democratic impulses and political movements of its time" (p. 72).

While certainly not hagiography, this biography is positive and sympathetic, and the praise it bestows on Joseph will be well-received by church members, as was Harold Bloom's *The American Religion*, which proclaimed Joseph Smith a religious genius. Remini writes that "The founder of this Church. . . is unquestionably the most important reformer and innovator in American religious history" (p. ix) and that "Joseph Smith is the religious figure in United States history who has had the largest following" (p. x). In addition to his role as prophet, Joseph Smith was "Nauvoo's mayor, chief justice, lieutenant general, trustee of the university, real estate agent, publisher of a monthly newspaper, proprietor of a store, part owner of a Mississippi steamboat, a subscriber to the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association, and a member of the newly

formed Masonic lodge" (p. 163). Remini labels him " [a] charismatic leader and an organizing genius. . . of little formal education but of striking intellectual power, [who] produced a vast amount of religious writing that has influenced millions of people around the world" (p. 180). "He was obviously a remarkable man who accomplished something truly exceptional" (181).

Aside from being situated within the useful historical context of "The Second Great Awakening," this biography adds no new material. LDS readers might take some exception to Remini's occasional regurgitation of some unsubstantiated biographical speculations, allegations, and hearsay concerning Joseph's many wives (e.g., he quotes Fawn Brodie but not the more thorough *In Sacred Loneliness* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997] by Todd Compton). Nevertheless, the book provides a good balanced introduction for general readers. Perhaps this biography will be responsible for increased interest in our faith, for ultimately Robert Remini effects a positive service to Joseph Smith and to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

A Frank Analysis of a Troubling Legacy

All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage, by Armand L. Mauss (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 343 pp.

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Armand Mauss, professor emeritus of Sociology and Religious Studies at Washington State University, has produced the authoritative and definitive study of the evolution of Mormon conceptions of race and lineage. As a practicing Latter-day Saint, former editor of *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and former president of the Mormon History Association,

Mauss brings together the intimacy of an insider, the empirical rigor of a social scientist, and a historian's attentiveness to change in an admirable weaving of three intertwined story lines.

In his first story line Mauss "illustrates the power of religious ideas and human behavior on each other, indeed on the operational definition of reality itself" (p. 1). He delicately examines the interplay between Mormon evangelism and the religious ideas and self-conceptions of Mormons and their new converts. For example, the failure of Mormons in the nineteenth century to achieve much enthusiastic reception and retention of the indigenous peoples they called Lamanites was followed late in the century by a shift in their perception: instead of seeing them as chosen Israelites, destined to join the saints in the construction of a new Zion, they saw them as just Indians, an image comparable to that found elsewhere in the United States. In the mid-twentieth century, largely under the leadership of Spencer W. Kimball, Mormons came once again to view Indians primarily as Lamanites as they engaged in renewed efforts to evangelize, foster, and educate Indian children. Disappointed with the results from these educational and social endeavors directed towards North American Indians, church leaders abandoned Indian programs in the mid-1980s, shifting focus and attention to the new Lamanites of Mexico and Central America where proselytizing had been more effective. Mauss finds similar patterns of influence between evangelism and identity construction among Mormons from Europe and Polynesia.

Another story line examined by Mauss "implicates religious ideas in the creation of racial prejudice and invidious ethnic distinctions" (p. 1). The influence of church policy and doctrine on Mormon prejudice towards Blacks illustrates the power of religious ideas. Belief that Blacks belonged to the cursed lineage of Cain "virtually prevented proselytizing altogether until 1978" when through revelation Kimball lifted the ban on Black participation in the priesthood (p. 274). Ironically, the change in this case came about after "longsuffering prospective converts themselves. . . reached out to the church and patiently waited for the LDS leaders to abandon their anachronistic understanding of Africans and their lineage" (p. 274). The effects of this legacy are felt most heavily in the United States where the LDS church still faces considerable difficulty attracting and retaining African-American members. Africans, at a distance from U.S. racial politics, appear to have been more receptive to the LDS gospel. Mauss notes, "The identification of blacks with Cain, however, has never been officially dropped or even mildly disavowed by church leaders" (p. 275). Interviews with black Mormons suggest, "As long as the folklore about Cain continues to circulate among white Mormons, many of them will continue to impose an identity on blacks that will greatly complicate relationships and church growth" (p. 275).

Mauss's third story line "explores the construction and reconstruction of various people's identities" (p. 1). He identifies ethnic, religious, and family identities as "products of negotiations

across time between peoples—often peoples of unequal power" (p. 1). This negotiation can be seen not only in Mormon relations with American Indians and Blacks, but also in the peculiar Mormon relation with Jews. Despite the obvious strength of their claim to an Israelite heritage, Jews have not been significant targets of Mormon evangelism.

The Mormons came to see their relationship with the Jews as one of two brothers, Judah and Joseph (or Ephraim), kneeling before the same Father. Ephraim might claim a superior understanding of the Father's ultimate will and might even reach out to the more recalcitrant brother, but it is left up to the Father himself finally to bring Judah back into the tent with the rest of Abraham's children. (p. 273)

While this view is "condescending. . . it has proved historically to be a strong neutralizer of the hostile anti-Semitism characteristic of mainstream Protestantism and Catholicism" (p. 273). Jews stand out as an exception to general patterns of Mormon missionary initiatives; they occupy a somewhat protected state characterized by "a deferential reluctance about proselyting" (p. 273).

While this book is an exceptional and rigorous evaluation of Mormon constructions of race and lineage, it does not fully examine the influence of LDS scriptures on racialism and prejudice in LDS thought. Mauss focuses on the uses Mormons have made of their scripture, not on the influences of similar religious ideas in Joseph Smith's environment on the sacred narratives

he published. Yet Mauss forthrightly acknowledges questions regarding the historicity of those texts, especially the Book of Abraham. He writes of the discovery in 1967 of the Joseph Smith papyrus fragments:

All the experts who studied the papyrus, Mormon and non-Mormon alike, agreed that it seemed to be a common funerary text from an Egyptian period much later than that of Abraham. Translated into English by the usual academic methods, the text bore no resemblance to the writings that Joseph Smith had attributed to Abraham. This discovery did not, of course, receive much publicity in the church, but it set Mormon scholars and apologists to work searching for an alternative explanation for the Book of Abraham. (p. 239)

He is similarly frank about the Book of Mormon, but in this case he leaves the impression that only non-Mormons regard it as a nineteenth-century document: "Although Joseph Smith presented the Book of Mormon to the world as his translation of an ancient document, it is generally regarded by non-Mormons as a nineteenth-century product, whether or not it was divinely inspired. (p. 117) Of course, there are many Mormon scholars who agree with the conclusions of their colleagues that the Book of Mormon is a product of the nineteenth century. Mauss appears to have left a fuller exploration of the constructions of race and lineage in Joseph Smith's cultural environment and his scriptural productions to other scholars. Given the necessity of focusing his narrative

and the costs that such endeavors may entail, this omission is understandable, even if regrettable.

One of the significant strengths of the book is the attention Mauss devotes to the perspectives of LDS ethnic minorities. His examination of constructions of race and lineage treats Nahua Mormons such as Margarito Bautista and Agricol Lozano and Navajo Mormons like George P. Lee and Ella Bedonie as active participants in the development of Lamanite identities (pp. 101-103, 129-131, 146-150). He similarly devotes attention to interviews of African American Mormons by Alan Cherry, "a prominent black convert of many years" (p. 243). Of course, there is

still much work to be done to better record and understand the views of ethnic minorities in the LDS church, but Mauss makes great strides in Mormon historiography by engaging and incorporating recent scholarship on identity and subjectivity.

All Abraham's Children is not only a book for scholars; it needs to read widely by members and church leaders alike. Mauss does a very impressive job of synthesizing four decades of research and making it accessible to lay persons as well as specialists. The book is an excellent testament to the compassion, integrity, balance, and enduring legacy of one of Mormonism's best social scientists.