

(and I think misleading) observation that “religion subordinates ritual to group and individual ethics (or at least emphasizes both); but magic gives little or no attention to group ethics, and emphasizes individual ethics primarily as another instrument to achieve the desired ends of ritual” (p. xiv). As a consequence of his particular distinction between religion and magic, Quinn differs with the defensive Mormon writers only over the timing of Mormonism’s renunciation of magic, and not with their insistence that their faith made a decisive break and became purely “religious.” Quinn offers no explanation for how and why — over the course of the nineteenth century — most Mormons joined their fellow American Protestants in forsaking the “magic world view.” In his telling, it simply happened (presumably by the growth of “rationality” as a *deus ex machina*).

On the other hand, if we define the magic-religion spectrum as I have suggested above (and never lose sight of the fact that every faith is some middle-ground compromise between the two), magic remains an important presence in Mormon cosmology (as I have argued elsewhere; see *DIALOGUE* 19 [Winter 1986]: 25–26). In contrast to other forms of Protestantism, Mormonism continues to insist upon the

interpenetration of spirit and matter, and continues to seek the progressive perfection of man’s ability to comprehend and master the cosmos through ritual. Today’s Mormons are set off from their progenitors less by their renunciation of a magic world view than by their concession to their church leaders of a monopoly over the exercise of rituals that can be defined as magical (what Quinn refers to as “essential priesthood ordinances of eternal consequences,” p. xx). Rather than extinguishing magic, Mormon leaders have (since 1830) steadily renamed, consolidated, centralized, and regulated its practice. Reconceiving the transition in this way resolves certain puzzles identified by Quinn: throughout life Joseph Smith, Jr., collected seer stones but ordered others’ destroyed whenever they competed with his revelations (p. 201); the prophet publicly denounced phrenological publications other than those he controlled (p. 219); similarly, Brigham Young endorsed astrology but discouraged a separate society devoted to its practice (pp. 215–16). The Mormon church has so successfully monopolized and renamed magic that twentieth-century believers can live in an overtly rational culture but continue to satisfy the universal human hunger for a medley of magic and religion.

## Seasoned Saints

*A Thoughtful Faith: Essays on Belief by Mormon Scholars* compiled and edited by Philip L. Barlow (Centerville, Utah: Canon Press, 1986) xiii, 310 pp., indexed, \$14.95.

Reviewed by Dawn Hall Anderson, Penn State Ph.D. candidate in American and British literature, currently residing in Salt Lake City.

I DISCOVERED EARLY in my scholastic career why a Mormon would never produce great literature. (A good Mormon, that is.) The

reason was simple, expounded with eloquence and authority by my BYU “Introduction to Poetry” teacher. He, along with W. B. Yeats, believed personality and character to be mutually exclusive modes of being: You could not be possessed of both at once.

Character in its most potent manifestation was an LDS businessman turned General Authority, all suited up in the armor of God and narrow-lapeled worsted wool. True personality, on the other hand, was represented by that moral sloven Dylan Thomas, from whose pen flowed high

poetry and praise of God not despite, but because of his eccentricity, flawed character, and heavy drinking. A series of such examples convinced me that the ways of God spell ruin for the aspiring artist or intellectual. In striving to obey God's laws, his or her individuality would be lopped off little by little that she or he might conform to more universal standards of godliness. Thus, the closer the faithful came to living a godly life, the more alike they would become. Losing your life to gain it meant trading individuality for eternity in the company of your duplicates.

Some years later, upon lowering my aspirations from poetry to godhood, I discovered the fallibility of poetry teachers. Phil Barlow's collected statements of faith by Mormon scholars would have saved me considerable mental fumbling as well. There is nothing depersonalized or duplicate about these twenty-two seasoned saints or their essays. They are, in fact, startling in their differences.

Philip Barlow completed his master's in theological studies at the Harvard Divinity School and is currently working toward a doctorate degree from Harvard in American religion and culture. His own essay expounds "fifteen thoughts," clearly articles of belief, which interweave and build into a "spiritual framework" and profoundly moving final profession of faith in the Church.

Poet Emma Lou Thayne plots her evolving relationship to the Church around a metaphor, childhood memories of the big swing at their mountain cabin, in prose which is, as Barlow observes, half-poetry.

In contrast, Eugene England reasons with his readers, carefully guiding them along a course "From Hope to Knowledge to Skepticism to Faith" with enough conversational first and second person plurals to have me checking my room for other members of the congregation.

Allen R. Barlow, an electronics engineer and physicist, writes a short story. Carlfred Broderick, noted marital and family therapist, charts his spiritual odyssey

with wry humor and wonderful candor. He begins, "Many a night as I grew up I lay awake listening to my mother and stepfather argue in their bedroom, which was separated from mine only by a thin wall. As I remember, two topics were the major themes of their sometimes heated discussions. One was me" (p. 86).

In ideas, as in style, form, and tone, these essays differ markedly. In fact, some clearly contradict each other in their assumptions and major premises. For instance, historian Richard Bushman records his continuing quest for the "specific, empirical, historical" evidences and arguments which would justify belief (p. 23). "That was why I liked Nibley: because he put his readers over a barrel. I wanted something no one could deny" (p. 25). Hearing the Grand Inquisitor passage in *The Brothers Karamazov* read at a young adult discussion group redirected his thinking.

The sentences that stuck with me that time through were the ones having to do with looking for reasons to believe that would convince the whole world and compel everyone to believe. That was the wish of the Inquisitor, a wish implicitly repudiated by Christ. The obvious fact that there is no convincing everyone that a religious idea is true came home strongly at that moment. It is impossible and arrogant, and yet that was exactly what I was attempting. When I sought to justify my belief, I was looking for answers that would persuade all reasonable men. . . . In that moment in Cambridge, I realized the futility of the quest (pp. 24–25).

Francine Bennion, on the other hand, describes an opposite progress toward deeper faith. From a point in her life when she felt "indifferent to matters of intellect" and what seemed "academic game-playing" (p. 104) she moves to the vantage point from which she asks, "Who can say that faith and reason are separate categories?" and asserts our profound need to establish "a large and reasonable context for looking at what scripture is, what humans are, who God is, what life is for,

and . . . for understanding not only answers, but also the questions" (p. 114).

Overall, these stimulating essays substantiate C. S. Lewis's admonition in *Mere Christianity*: "If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you, brains and all. . . . God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers" (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1943, p. 75).

The contributors, though heavily weighted with historians, also include poets, literary critics, professors, writers, attorneys, psychologists, philosophers, theologians, and a scientist or two: Richard D. Poll, Richard L. Bushman, John T. Kesler, Kenneth W. Godfrey, Thomas G. Alexander, Eugene England, Carlfred B. Broderick, Francine Bennion, E. Gary Smith, Robert C. Fletcher, Emma Lou Thayne, Victor B. Cline, Allen R. Barlow, Mary L. Bradford, William Clayton Kimball, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Noel B. Reynolds, Leonard J. Arington, Philip L. Barlow, Bruce W. Young, Richard L. Anderson, and Richard H. Crafcoft. Most of these essays are the length of a modest sacrament meeting talk.

In response to the editor's invitation "to publicly articulate the reasons for their steadfast belief in Joseph Smith's prophetic role and in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ" (p. xii), some offered essays dating from as early as 1966, reprinted from *Sunstone* or *DIALOGUE* articles, a BYU devotional address, and even, in the case of Richard Poll's now classic essay distinguishing between Liahona and Iron Rod saints, a sacrament meeting talk. Others, in the spirit of the New Testament injunction to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15), wrote expressly for this collection spiritual autobiographies of such honesty, intimacy, humor, and personal wisdom that they would never pass *Correlation*.

Actually these essays provide a wonderful antidote for those of us who have overdosed on abstract speculative theology and the indignation industry which sometimes flourishes in submissions to *DIALOGUE* and *Sunstone*. They are illuminating, affirmative essays, the best testimony meeting you are ever likely to attend.

## God's Hand in Mormon History

*The Church in the Twentieth Century: The Impressive Story of the Advancing Kingdom*, by Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985). 470 pp., including bibliography, index, photographs, and charts. \$11.95.

Reviewed by Gary James Bergera, publisher, Signature Books, Salt Lake City.

FOR RICHARD O. COWAN, a professor of LDS history at Brigham Young University specializing in twentieth-century Mormonism, the history of the Mormon kingdom is not only the religious success story of the last 2,000 years but the inspiring witness to an increasingly secular society of God's personal and continuing involvement with humanity.

In *The Church in the Twentieth Century*, Cowan faithfully chronicles that triumphal history, producing a useful but sometimes cursory introduction to Mormonism's near-phenomenal growth, its successful adaptation to its environment, and its victories in overcoming many of the problems associated with rapid growth. What he necessarily sacrifices in terms of depth, Cowan makes up for in breadth, painting a vast panorama of impressive accomplishments and simple faith—all of which seems to have marked virtually every aspect of the Church's encounter with the modern, gentile world.

As both a Mormon historian and teacher of religion at BYU, Cowan is aware that some ranking Church leaders have