

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

semi-officially criticized recent Mormon histories as being too “secular” and so frankly acknowledges at the outset that “even though the Lord has worked through fallible human beings and institutions, I am convinced that his hand can be seen, not only in specific incidents where inspired guidance was obvious, but also in the overall progress of his kingdom during the present century” (p. ix).

Indeed, it is clear that although the book is directed primarily to Mormon readers, both Cowan and his publisher view this new history as a potential missionary tool. But such an explicitly faith-promoting approach, while undoubtedly reassuring to some readers, presented me, at least, with several problems.

First, I found Cowan’s repeated emphasis on divine intervention in Mormon affairs sometimes distracting. At what seemed to be virtually every turn of events, Cowan finds indisputable evidence of the hand of the Lord. Eventually, the Lord appears to be almost everywhere, at every level of the institution, personally guiding his chosen leaders (usually men) in every important decision confronting the Church. This is especially apparent in those chapters dealing with the welfare program of the 1930s, the missionary program following World War II, the correlation program of the 1960s and 1970s, and the destiny of the Church.

In fact, towards the end of the book, I found myself asking, somewhat exasperatedly, I suppose, which event in Mormon history the Lord *hadn’t* had his hand in and how he managed to have time to do anything else but supervise his church, which seemed unable to function very long without him. More importantly, however, the more the Lord surfaced in Cowan’s narrative as an active participant, the less of an impact his presence seemed to make. Whatever Cowan’s intentions, I can’t help but wonder if such an approach might actually trivialize the very thing it seeks to highlight.

Second, Cowan’s use of sources occa-

sionally raised some nagging questions. As proof of the Lord’s intimate involvement with his church, Cowan sometimes relies heavily, and apparently without critical evaluation, on the reminiscences and recollections of the men involved (see, for example, pp. 179–80, 225–26). Usually recorded many years after the events they describe, these testimonials unfortunately lack the contemporariness that would have lent Cowan’s conclusions of the Lord’s participation greater plausibility. For it is difficult not to wonder whether the memories of these witnesses have been affected by the passing of so many years.

Third, Cowan’s commitment to the “official” (i.e., faith-promoting) version of Mormon history seems to have affected some of the historical “facts” upon which he bases his reconstruction of the past. For example, he too readily accepts the official version of the 1911 evolution controversy at BYU, writing that “these [i.e., four] teachers were dismissed” (p. 116). Actually, two of the teachers resigned, one was fired, and the fourth resigned four years later in 1915. He refers to Polynesians as “sweet” and “lovable” — no other race is described in this way — and suggests that because of this the Church has flourished among them (p. 268). He discusses briefly the Church’s position on women and the Equal Rights Amendment (pp. 329–30, 397–98), but not Sonia Johnson or the Church’s direct involvement in various anti-ERA movements. His discussion of temples and temple work assumes a Mormon audience, which is unfortunate because I’m certain that, given the Church’s intensive temple-building program, many non-Mormons would be interested in reading more about this topic.

This institutional focus also affects Cowan’s discussion of the 1978 revelation on blacks and the priesthood. Cowan echoes the official rhetoric, consistently referring to the announcement as “the 1978 revelation . . . extending the priesthood to worthy males of all races” (p. 391). Without knowing that before 1978 only black

males of African descent could not hold the priesthood, non-Mormon readers might conclude that the priesthood had been reserved for Caucasians only.

And as a final example: Cowan notes that in 1979 the office of Patriarch to the Church was permanently vacated and its present occupant assigned emeritus status because of "the availability of patriarchal service throughout the world" (p. 409). But, he continues, the Church has nonetheless called several patriarchs on short-term assignment to give blessings in areas of the world not covered by stakes and stake patriarchs. Thus, readers are left wondering why the office of Patriarch to the Church was vacated at all if there is still a need for it.

Topics Cowan does not even broach, evidently because of his emphasis on the Church's successes, include, to name a few, the 1930 debate among General Authorities over organic evolution (an excellent case study of the Church's confrontation with science), the committee of General Authorities assigned to help modernize and streamline the temple ceremonies during the 1920s, the challenges and problems confronting the Church's mutual improvement programs during the 1930s, the Third Convention in Mexico, the tragic Helmut Huebner incident in World War II Germany, the proselyting excesses in Europe in the 1960s when the push for converts resulted in hundreds, if not thousands, of so-called baseball baptisms, and the Church's financial burdens incurred during the late 1950s and early 1960s as a result of the deficit-spending policies of Henry G. Moyle. My guess is that Cowan chose not to discuss any of these subjects because of

their controversial nature. But for me, their absence became far more distracting than any discussion of them could have been.

Given the apparent unwillingness to address these and other presumably sensitive aspects of twentieth-century Mormonism — subjects which, because of their very controversialness, illuminate how the Church has dealt with the modern world — Cowan's narrative sometimes failed to capture the drama that is so much a part of Mormon history and to engage me in what should be a memorable and satisfying experience with my religious and spiritual heritage.

Where Cowan excels is in his use and graphic presentation of numerical data. His book boasts some thirty-five charts and tables, ranging from "The Church's Public Image, 1887–1917," "Sacrament Meeting Attendance (1920–70)," and "Rate of Growth Per Decade (1860–1980)," to "Melchizedek Priesthood Bearers (as percentage of membership by areas, 1920–70)," "Converts Per Missionary (periodically by area, 1925–80)," and "The Lord's Law of Revenue (percentage of Church funds spent for various purposes, 1925–55)." For the sheer breadth of research and knowledge the compilation of these figures must have required, Cowan's accomplishment is impressive.

In summary, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* is an adequate, although incomplete, introduction to modern Mormonism and a useful compendium of statistical and other numerical data relating to the Church's growth and development. A more complete history of the Church's encounter with and response to the twentieth century remains to be attempted.

A Life Well-Shared

So Far: Poems by Margaret Rampton Munk (Bethesda, Maryland: Greentree Publishing, 1986), 93 pp., \$5.95.

Reviewed by Mary L. Bradford, former editor of *DIALOGUE* and author of *Leaving*

Home, who is currently working on a biography of Lowell L. Bennion.

IN THE FALL OF 1985 *DIALOGUE* published Meg Munk's suite of poems entitled, "One Year." In a mature voice and through par-