Book Reviews

VALEEN TIPPETTS AVERY. ***From Mission to Madness: Last Son of the Mormon Prophet***. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998, xii + 357 pp., $49.95).

Reviewed by William D. Russell, Graceland College.

Some of us in the RLDS Church have wondered what happened to "The Sweet Singer of Israel"—David Hyrum Smith, youngest son of Joseph the Martyr. This "Son of Promise," whose father was murdered before David was born, spent the last twenty-seven years of his life in the Northern Illinois Hospital and Asylum for the Insane at Elgin, Illinois. Yet his father, shortly before he died, named his son "David" and prophesied that he would "make his mark on the world" (22). His older brother, Joseph Smith III, called him to be a counselor in the First Presidency of the RLDS Church at a time David was well on the way to becoming insane. Before long, David was institutionalized, never to be released as a sane man.

It must have been embarrassing to the RLDS Church for a member of its First Presidency to be certifiably insane. "Insanity and confinement in an asylum for an indefinite time does not disqualify a member of the first presidency from retaining his office," taunted a reader of the *Deseret News* (267).

Val Avery has written a very sensitive biography of the Sweet Singer of Israel. The reader will probably not be able to tell whether the author is LDS, RLDS, or non-Mormon. She has consulted virtually all the primary sources available as well as the most relevant secondary sources. She came to this task well prepared by virtue of her coauthorship (with Linda King Newell) of their award-winning biography of David's mother, Emma Smith. Her research on Emma served as excellent preparation for her Ph.D. dissertation on David Hyrum Smith. Both books have illuminated the lives of two persons often forgotten, since so much of what has been written is about the men in power with little attention to the women and children in their lives. Emma is important in Mormon history in her own right but has been largely ignored because she did not go west. Avery's study of David is important to help us understand why the

Prophet Joseph's son, who showed great potential, went insane instead of realizing that potential.

Some RLDS people wondered if David had been poisoned while doing missionary work in Utah, although Joseph Smith III told the Saints not to believe that. Joseph III was more inclined to believe David went over the edge because of his experiment with spiritualism in Utah in his association with Amasa Lyman. Some LDS people concluded that David became insane when he came to the realization in Utah that his father had been a polygamist. That was contrary to the position his church had taken, and it was a subject so sensitive that David could not raise it with his mother or older brother.

The latter view seems most plausible to this author. When a person has held that his or her religion is "the only truth," it is very traumatic when this person comes to doubt the truthfulness of that faith. When we consider also that David's father and brother were regarded as prophets and that those prophets believed David would accomplish great things for the faith, we can understand how a sensitive young lad like David might be "driven crazy."

David's marriage to Clara Hartshorn illuminates women's role in the strongly patriarchal society of late nineteenth-century America. The reader's heart will ache for this attractive, young woman who begins her adult life with great promise when she marries the son of and brother of prophets. But they never establish a home of their own, and David never establishes himself as a provider for his family. He is frequently away from home on missions. When David begins to exhibit symptoms of insanity, he accuses his wife of being unfaithful. Finally, he is institutionalized, where for the last twenty-seven years of his marriage he rarely writes to Clara and seems to put her out of his mind. In isolation, Clara remains faithful to David until his death in 1904.

Letters of David to Clara have survived, but her letters to him were not considered important enough to save. If she ever visited David at the hospital in Elgin, no record of the visit was kept.

One other relationship of David's bears mention. Charles Jensen was his best friend. David's letters reveal him as being able to be candid with "Charley" much more than he could be with his wife or his brother, Joseph III. Charles appears to be homosexual, and yet David does not reject him. Rather, he counsels him on how to seek a wife and then accepts Charley's decision to never marry. It is to Avery's credit that she addresses this relationship in a separate chapter, and she gives it an informed and sensitive treatment.

Thus, it is no surprise to this reviewer that *From Mission to Madness* has received the Evans Award. It is a touching story of a gifted but tragic figure in Mormon history.

PETER CRAWLEY. ***A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church, Volume One, 1830–1847***. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998, 477 pp., 3 indices: Author/Title; Biographical; Subject, $54.95.)

Reviewed by David J. Whittaker, Special Collections and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

Peter Crawley, a retired professor of mathematics at Brigham Young University, has collected early Mormon imprints since his graduate-school days. He has acquired, traded, or sold a significant number of the items and in the process has become an authority on both their history and content. His attention to detail, both bibliographical and historical, are apparent throughout the present work. His close associations with the individuals responsible for rare books at both the Lee Library at BYU and at the Archives/Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City have benefited his own as well as their respective collecting activities. In addition, his long-term associations with a number of rare-book dealers and private collectors have given him a unique knowledge of Mormon imprints, some of which are known only in the copy in the possession of these individuals.

Through the years, Crawley has produced a number of smaller, more focused essays and exhibit catalogs on early Mormon print culture.[1] All of these works have been drawn on to produce this comprehensive bibliography. In addition, the author was awarded the CES Commissioner's Research Fellowship in 1978, which provided additional financial assistance for this project.

This volume provides a detailed, annotated, and chronological bibliography of 345 Mormon imprints published from the 1830s, when the Book of Mormon first appeared, to the 1847 hymnal issued by Lyman Wight's Texas colony. Crawley carefully details each Mormon newspaper, hymnal, tract, pamphlet, broadside, and scriptural text, including subsequent editions in the United States and Europe. Where no copy has yet been located but enough evidence can be gathered to prove its appearance in printed form, the item is listed and discussed. And, given the eclecticism of the early Mormon press, Crawley carefully notes when items were first printed or reprinted in early newspapers. He makes it clear at the first that he does not include every printed item—excluding, for example, printed bank notes or elders' licenses.

The structure of the volume is chronological, with each item numbered 1 through 345. Then, the scholarly explanatory notes are printed in the back of the volume, easily located by the number assigned to the imprint. The three indices are also helpful, but one must remember that only the Subject Index refers to actual page numbers; the others refer to the item numbers.

Such a work as this is an essential tool for students of Mormon history and

culture. Each entry is situated into early Mormon history; and Crawley has also provided, where possible, good detail on the individuals who created these printed works. His discussion of the three David Rogers, for example, will help Mormon bibliographers better identify which one they are dealing with (see pp. 83–83, 236, 418). He also provides good information on the various printing presses Mormons used or acquired in their activities, even following the history of the early Mormon Missouri press to its later use in Colorado (18–19). He has also moved beyond just analytical and historical bibliography by suggesting the intellectual and cultural roles these works played in shaping and defining Mormon history and thought. This is clearly so for the works of Parley P. Pratt, whose books and pamphlets are traced with detail, as well as those works that either were influenced by him or were directly copied by others. But Crawley also treats lesser-known authors like David Candland, who was the first Mormon author to issue a series of pamphlets on Mormon doctrines (345–47).

Particularly important for students of the Nauvoo period is the realization that of the 345 items discussed, only 62 had appeared before 1840. Thus, the flowering of Mormon literature during the Illinois sojourn is a particularly important part of the story Crawley presents. He also provides information on topics whose imprints become clearer—this is especially true of the little-known British and American Joint Stock Company (313–15) or of the published efforts of Sheriff Jacob Backenstos and his attempts to maintain civil order in Hancock County during the last months of the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo (107–8, 186, 231, 313–15, 338–39, 345, 351–52). Crawley handles well the printed literature generated by Joseph Smith's presidential campaign (244–47, 253–64, 309–312) as well as the emerging responses to the literature of dissent following Joseph Smith's death in 1844, as in the Reuben Miller pamphlets (349–51).

The detail is so good and the descriptions so comprehensive that it is perhaps trivial to suggest a few criticisms. Although the volume is more attractive because title pages of various works have been reproduced throughout, it is unfortunate that the actual sources for the facsimiles are hidden on page 456 rather than identified with each item, as is usually the procedure for this kind of work. It is not always clear what is "Mormon"; but, in general, an item is included either because the imprint was authored by a member of The Church or Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or the item was actually printed on a Mormon-owned press, as was the infamous Udney Hay Jacob, *The Peacemaker* (211–12). But there are exceptions: the Jacob Backenstos items are by a non-Mormon but are included because of their obvious significance, and the Mormon-printed *Hancock Eagle* was excluded because it was printed for the non- Mormon audience (the author does discuss this on pages 21–22). But given these criteria, why was what appears to be the first pamphlet written by a Mormon, known only by its citation in an 1834 anti-Mormon book, not included?[2] And the letter of John P. Greene to the First Presidency, dated Cincinnati 30 June 1839, which gives more details on the publishing of John P. Greene's *Facts Relative to the Expulsion*

of the Mormons from the State of Missouri (86–88)[3] was somehow missed by the author; but very little else seems to have been.

This volume itself is already a rare book. It has hardly been available to the general reader in any bookstore. Although the author received no royalties for the volume (only thirteen hundred copies were printed), several individual dealers and collectors managed to acquire many copies of the volume with the express purpose of warehousing them until they could be made available at much higher prices. Thus, this important volume was essentially out of print a few days after it arrived from the bindery.

Crawley's volume builds on a tradition of Mormon bibliographical work that includes such notables as Dale Morgan and Chad Flake. But his work extends this tradition by moving it into more contemporary book history. Although it is solidly anchored in analytical bibliography, it moves beyond to locate the works in their cultural milieu by showing relationships among printed works, various authors, and the cultural significance of these works for Mormon history and thought. Thus, he is both book historian and bibliographer.

The Religious Studies Center is to be commended for undertaking this important project. We look forward to the next two volumes that will take the story to the eve of the American Civil War. I suggest that the publisher consider a paper-bound edition to make the volume more accessible to a larger audience.

Notes

1. These include: "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints n New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *Brigham Young University Studies* 12 (Summer 1972): 465–527; "The First Australian Mormon Imprints," *Gradalis Review* 2 (Fall 1973): 38–51; "Two Rare Missouri Documents," *BYU Studies* 14 (Summer 1974): 502–27; "The Passage of Mormon Primitivism," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13 (Winter 1980): 26–37; "Joseph Smith and a Book of Commandments," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 42 (Autumn 1980): 18–32; "The Constitution of the State of Deseret," *Friends of the Harold B. Lee Library Newsletter* No. 19 (Provo, Utah: Friends of the Library, BYU, 1982) [reprinted in *BYU Studies* 29 (Fall 1989): 7–22]; "Parley P. Pratt: Father of Mormon Pamphleteering," *Dialogue* 15 (Autumn 1982): 13–26 [reprinted as the foreword to *The Essential Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990); *Notable Mormon Books, 1830–1857* (Provo, Utah: Friends of the Harold B. Lee Library, 1974), with Chad J. Flake; *A Mormon Fifty: An Exhibition in the Harold B. Lee Library in Conjunction with the Annual Conference of the Mormon Historical Association* (Provo, Utah: Friends of the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. 1984), with Chad J. Flake; and *Mormon Imprints in Great Britain and the Empire, 1836–1857. An Exhibition in the Harold B. Lee Library in Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles* (Provo: Friends of the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, 1987), with David J. Whittaker.

2. See Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), 133. The author, a Mr. Higby, was probably the James Higby mentioned in *History of the Church* 1:355–56.

3. See Joseph Smith Letterbook, 1837–1842, MS in Historical Department, LDS Church.

LEONARD J. ARRINGTON. **Adventures of a Church Historian**. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998, 249 pp., photographs, index, $29.95, ISBN 0-252-02381-1.)

Reviewed by J. Spencer Fluhman, Graduate Student, Department of History, University of Wisconsin—Madison.

Those interested in understanding the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will at some point encounter the work of Leonard Arrington. Widely appreciated as the dean of modern Mormon studies, Arrington crafted path-breaking history of Mormonism and the American West for five decades. *Adventures of a Church Historian* punctuates a productive and memorable career and stands as Arrington's final book; he passed away early in 1999. This final work is a personal chronicle of Arrington's service as LDS Church Historian from 1972–82—a period of his professional life he describes as "particularly intense and meaningful" (5).

Adventures offers readers an "inside" view of the establishment of the Church's Historical Department, various departmental projects and publications, relationships shared by Arrington and various Church authorities, and the eventual relocation of the department's History Division to the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. Readers are also treated to descriptions of major historical works produced during the period of Arrington's service, along with biographical introductions to several prominent LDS historians.

Ever candid, Arrington does not hesitate to describe the frustrations he experienced during the period, nor does he shy away from articulating what he regards as the tensions and pitfalls in the field of Mormon history. Written in a warm and engaging style, *Adventures of a Church Historian* provides a glimpse into the mind and work of this distinguished scholar as only a personal memoir can.

Adventures of a Church Historian is rightly described as a memoir. Arrington does not intend for the book to represent the *history* of his time as Church Historian, acknowledging that it represents a personal view. Even so, he faced several methodological problems from the outset. For instance, though any memoir is by nature limited in its objectivity, this is especially apparent in *Adventures*, where much of his discussion centers on conflict over the work of the History Division. Arrington concedes that he was often given no formal explanation of decisions that affected the Division, was not present in meetings where those decisions were discussed, and was unaware of communication between authorities relating to his work. Accordingly, his conclusions must be viewed with the understanding that he often had little to work with when formulating interpretations of events and people. Indeed, many of his conclusions appear to have been made on the basis of facial expressions or hearsay. Some

may find his assertions about the rivalry between the Church's presiding quorums and the power of "assertive" junior members of the Quorum of the Twelve unsatisfying for this reason (143, 150).

Moreover, Arrington's preoccupation with certain facets of the story shapes the way he deals with his own sources. Early in the book, he queries (for his readers), "Do general authorities ever disagree? What are they like as human beings when they shed their official status as prophets, seers, and revelators? Along with their significant strengths are there also weaknesses—or at least misunderstandings?" (3). These questions serve as the unifying theme for Arrington's narrative. Accordingly, and unfortunately, the book is weighted toward negative confrontations and frustrations. Although it is true that Arrington utilized sources created contemporarily with his term as Church Historian, he does use privilege sources from the *end* of his period of service—when frustrations were no doubt near their apex.

Arrington's brief note on sources relates that he included material from a history written by Lavina Fielding Anderson (239). In fact, he clearly follows Anderson's narrative in describing key episodes in *Adventures*, borrowing structure, tone, and often language.[1] Her "Doves and Serpents: The Activities of Leonard Arrington as Church Historian, 1972–1982" was written in 1982 and distributed among Arrington's close associates and family. Arrington's reliance on this work is both unmistakable and problematical, particularly since Anderson acknowledges that her assessments were not made in a spirit of objectivity. Though she relates that Arrington's diaries (her primary source material) were quite thorough, she admits he was "less quick to record negative feelings about events and, though scrupulous about keeping a record of the events themselves, sometimes would not comment on them until several days had elapsed and then only obliquely."[2] Given that admission, her appraisal of her own work is confusing: "If this history seems to be preoccupied with problem, conflicts, and disappointments, it does not reflect the general atmosphere of enthusiasm, pleasure, and good will that always emanated from the History Division."[3]

This incongruity between Anderson's emphasis on "conflict" and her description of Arrington's diaries may stem from her own feelings about the restructuring of the History Division. She concedes that her perspective "is far from objective" and that she is a "partisan of Leonard and his colleagues . . . not of those who held differing philosophies."[4] Some may find the tone of Arrington's *Adventures* more like "Doves and Serpents" than his own earlier brief appraisal of the founding of the Historical Department written for the *Journal of Mormon History* in 1992.[5] It is unfortunate that an unbalanced work written in 1982 served as a major interpretive lens through which Arrington viewed and related the record of his time as Church Historian.

When we consider Arrington's reliance on "Doves and Serpents," it is significant to note what he chose not to include. For instance, he neglects to mention in *Adventures* that a significant portion of his diary (from September 1981

to August 1982), the main source for both his book and Anderson's work, was comprised of reminiscences. So though it may be true that Arrington "tried to recount [his] experiences and impressions at the time they occurred," a substantial portion of the narrative treating the decade-long period was created in 1981–82, when Arrington was in the midst of the restructuring and relocation of the History Division.

Also missing from *Adventures* are several experiences that might revise Arrington's central thrust: that a small minority of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve objected to his work, pushed for his removal from the History Division, and finally succeeded—despite general approval of the First Presidency. Several examples related in "Doves and Serpents" reveal that there was general disagreement between *many* Church authorities and Arrington about the nature of the work to be done in the History Division, including members of the First Presidency.[6] Arrington seems to have singled out two or three authorities in *Adventures* with whom he was particularly frustrated, even though many at Church headquarters apparently envisioned the work of the Historical Department differently than Arrington did, from 1972 on. Only when scholars can compare Arrington's diaries, Lavina Anderson's "Doves and Serpents," and *Adventures of a Church Historian* together will we be able to more fully understand what went into the making of the "remembered truth" that comprises *Adventures* (5).

The book will be of interest to Latter-day Saints interested in writing Mormon history. Arrington provides something of a theory of writing Mormon history, though it is surprisingly uncomplicated given all his experience. Arrington oversimplifies pertinent historiographical debates by dichotomizing the field with labels like "honest" and "objective" and "truthful" that are entirely unhelpful (3n, 56, 69, 111). As he relates it, any "thinking" Latter-day Saint will opt for his brand of Mormon history because he is simply telling the truth (62). Those who find fault with his approach to history are described as defensive "traditionalists" or "distrustful hardliners" (104, 101). Arrington understandably felt strongly about objections to his work; but, in this case, he missed an opportunity to locate tension in the field appropriately. The dichotomy is not between those interested in honesty and good scholarship and those who are not. The strain within the field (and often within the historian) is more about the difficulty of writing about one's own religious past given the standards and assumptions of modern historical scholarship. The fact that different historians at different times see vastly different things in the same documents dismantles the idea that there is an objective "truth" to be had in the documentary record. Arrington unfortunately reduces this complexity, and the book is limited as a result.[7]

Throughout the book, Arrington maintains that one can easily write history that satisfies both an LDS readership and the general academic community of

historians. This is a perplexing assertion given Arrington's chronicle of confrontation and disagreement. In reality, few historians have come near to achieving this. Part of the problem in bridging the two readerships comes in the divergent expectations and assumptions that each group has for the Mormon past. At one end of an interpretive spectrum is the field of history that disregards, if not ridicules, divine or supernatural explanations of events, ideas, or people. The other end, representing what Arrington calls a pietistic view, places the divine at the fore in conceptualizing the major events and people of Mormon history. For the former group, "truth" is to be had in the analysis and testing of evidence provided by documents of the past; the latter group regards historical religious "truth" as being ultimately independent from documentary sources, though those sources may be useful in confirming the "truth." LDS historians who study their own religious past position themselves at various places on the spectrum, giving the divine more or less prominence in the telling of their story. The tensions come in the disagreements over what constitutes "reality" in the Mormon past—where on the spectrum the story should be told. There is clearly no consensus on how Latter-day Saints should write their history.

Though he had been in the midst of the contestations over the writing of Mormon history for decades, Arrington apparently remained convinced that one can successfully write for both an LDS and non-LDS academic audience (148). He arguably came as close as any historian to bridging the two readerships, yet his work was still criticized as being one-sided by one group or faithless by others. Work by other prominent LDS historians, such as Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (1984), has similarly been critiqued for being apologetic. Perhaps Arrington was right that one can satisfy both audiences, but *Adventures of a Church Historian* vividly illustrates the difficulties in doing just that. Despite its limitations, *Adventures of a Church Historian* nonetheless poses important questions about the writing of religious history and the relationship between the "kingdom" and the "craft." Moreover, it provides a fascinating window into the mind and heart of one of the twentieth century's memorable historians.

Notes

1. Lavina Fielding Anderson, "Doves and Serpents: The Activities of Leonard Arrington as Church Historian, 1972–1982," copy at Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. This work is a condensation of a documentary history written by Anderson (see p. 288). In fairness, Anderson's language and structure may have been heavily influenced by Arrington's diaries. In any case, the similarities between the two works are obvious. For examples, compare pages 83–84, 119–20, 124–25, and 142–43 in "Doves and Serpents" to pages 119–20, 143–48, and 154–56 in *Adventures of a Church Historian*, respectively.

2. Ibid., vi.

3. Ibid., vii.

4. Ibid., vii–viii.

5. See Arrington, “The Founding of the LDS Church Historical Department, 1972,” *Journal of Mormon History* 18 (Fall 1992): 41–56. For other views, see Davis Bitton, “Ten Years in Camelot: A Personal Memoir,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 16 (Autumn 1983): 9–20; and Dean L. May, “In Memoriam: Leonard James Arrington,” *Sunstone* 22 (June 1999): 8–11.

6. “Doves and Serpents,” 16–17, 32–33, 35, 40–41, 51, 65, 138–39, 186, 188–89.

7. Some of Arrington’s thoughts on the difficulty of writing Mormon history as a Latter-day Saint are found in “Doves and Serpents,” but they were unfortunately not included in *Adventures*. See “Doves and Serpents,” 166.