
REVIEWS

AN ABUNDANCE OF OPINIONS

THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART

By ARTHUR HENRY KING

Bookcraft, 1986, 286 pp. \$10.95



Reviewed by Arthur R. Bassett

SUMMER IS MY SEASON for casual reading—so when the winter semester ended, I decided that it was time to fulfill a long-overdue commitment I made to SUNSTONE to review Arthur Henry King's book, *The Abundance of the Heart*.

Actually, it was my second time through the book since I needed to refresh my mind regarding particulars. There are few church books that I would give the time for a second reading (and I probably would not have reread this, except for my previous commitment). As it turned out, I was glad that I did, because some of my initial impressions were tempered this time through.

Brother King's book is not the stereotypical church book; it deserves far more consideration than most. However, I have been mildly puzzled by the majority of the reviews of the book that have appeared to this point—most of which have contained primarily glowing reports, filled with accolades and bordering on adulation, written primarily by friends and admiring disciples. In the course of my reading I often found myself wanting to differ violently with them. *The Abundance of the Heart* is not a book to be readily dismissed with high praise. I wanted to condemn it as much as to praise it—and found myself doing both alter-

nately. It is a provocative book, pregnant with controversial issues. Each page engages the reader with a new argument. It would be an excellent book for study groups to read and discuss.

The Abundance of the Heart is a collection of essays with no unifying theme throughout. In one way that is its major strength. One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is the abundance of issues King raises from his heart: everything from dating practices to child-rearing (with interesting asides on American wedding receptions); from the utopian university to student life at BYU (and the two are definitely not synonymous in King's view); aesthetics and the function of art; class structure in England and in Mormon Salt Lake City; the problems of a democratic system and of patriotism; foreign service missionaries; American teens; the arrogance of shyness; proper physical posture for those who would be sons of God; death (and the absence of it in our lives); love (with interesting views on the physical aspects of human relationships); tradition and genealogy; journal writing; the function of history in every person's life; sincerity and rhetoric; speed reading; reading aloud; Joseph Smith's writing style (a major feature in King's own conversion); music (the kind we should listen to and the kind the Tabernacle Choir ought to sing); television; mathematics; the atonement; interior decoration; his conversion (especially interest-

ing is his account of his conversion to the Book of Mormon); Islam; Shakespeare; children's literature (including a passage on the difference between the worth of fairy tales and that of folk tales); the morality of language . . . these are only a few of the topics he introduces and illuminates by what he perceives to be the light of the gospel.

Alternately working inside the system—ie., the Church, Brigham Young University, and America—and then outside, King brings a fresh viewpoint which is stimulating and oftentimes combative. The variety of subjects, and his insights into each, constantly keeps one off balance. These are not topics traditionally considered in church gatherings, formal or informal—in most cases they represent a genuine departure from conventional talking points upon which we have decided our stance (rationale for defending that stance) long ago. These are fresh questions, new ideas that could provoke meaningful discussions in any group. Many of them raise important questions that merit attention; few are insignificant.

Central to most of King's writing, however, is the deeper question of the relationship between Mormonism and traditional American values and practices. It is a problem he raises throughout. One of the major difficulties for many American Mormons, according to King, lies in their inability to draw lines of demarcation between a universal principle of the gospel (good for all people at all times), and a specifically American adaptation of a gospel principle. As an outsider to the current American system—both in terms of place and time (this book is often reminiscent of Victorian England, especially the ideas of John Ruskin)—King continually challenges many cherished practices close to the heart of traditional American Mormonism.

Therein lies both the strength and the weakness of the volume, including one of the most irritating ironies in King's book: its tone. He spends much space and effort throughout the volume condemning the class structure in England—a nightmare from his early life that still seems to haunt him. Unfortunately, it often appears as if he is trying to cast off this incubus by reversing his status in Mormon society in America (though I am certain he would be the first to deny this).

His constant name dropping and references to his vast readings and experiences both in the literary world and in the educational realm (King was an administrator in charge of British cultural and educational work overseas), could easily be mistaken for an attempt to impress his Church reading audience. Though methinks he doth protest too much that he is

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not talking as a highbrow, an elitist aura plagues much of the work, a perceived tone of arrogance throughout (he admits that he is sure he “was a little snob,” and that he “must have been a prig”—I suspect that many will come away from the book mistakenly feeling that he still is). “But,” as he himself notes, “don’t think that snobbery is necessarily a bad thing if it enables one to dress better, to think better, to read better; there is something in it.”

That is one of my reasons for being thankful for having gone through the book a second time. A second reading helped me past the tone into the arguments, and it is at this level that *The Abundance of the Heart* çitç works best. I frankly am less concerned about whether members of the Church should or shouldn’t chew gum in sacrament meeting, or whether a man should or shouldn’t have his hands in his pockets while he prays, or slouch while he walks (minor issues King introduces in passing). I personally hope that a loving Father sees beyond any of that. What we are hearing at that point, I would argue, are remnants of a value structure dating back to Victorian England. And I personally do not believe that American universities lower the quality of education by admitting too many students—though I do agree that many are in universities who ought not to be there. To me, this smacks of British educational elitism—which he constantly appears to attack on one hand, and to support on the other. However, he argues his point with such conviction that one is forced to rethink one’s own stance on this issue—as on all others.

I am also troubled by King’s authoritarian stance throughout, and would prefer that he offer his ideas as suggestions or issues for discussion, rather than as dogmas. The same is true of his pontificating on issues—the “greatest passage in all literature,” the “greatest short lyric poem,” the “greatest autobiography,” the “best modern example of critic and poet,” the “best books to read for a lifetime,” the “greatest sin being committed by intellectuals in this church.” Ultimately one is relieved to find even one qualifier: “perhaps,” as in “perhaps the best English prose writer of the early nineteenth century.”

But all of that is to trivialize the importance of King’s book. It is evident that he has traveled extensively, and that he has matched insights with some of the finest minds of our time. These credentials alone should qualify him to speak with insights not common to most within the Church. It may well be, if one can get past the desire to defend one’s own artistic or national biases, that there may indeed be room for reevaluation of many of our cherished prejudices. A careful reading should at least

make American Mormons more aware of the problems inherent in carrying the gospel into all the world, and cause us to think more carefully about the roots of some of our biases—to separate where possible the difference between generic Mormon culture per se and Americanisms. That is why I highly recommend the book for study groups.

Some of his ideas I found fascinating—such as the idea of encouraging returned missionaries to enter into foreign service careers where they might take their families back to the mission fields where they served, and thereby function as a new type of missionary (his comparisons with the missionary work of the church in the Roman era are perhaps instructive). His ideas on history, genealogy, and the extended family provide meaningful insights into that aspect of the gospel, insights that again can only be described as exciting—“Going back in eternity is part of going forward. We walk into the future backwards.”

All members of the Church could benefit from his thoughts on the difference between religion and morality (religion functioning at a much deeper level), and his thoughts on sincerity. He has thought long and carefully about the problems of language and rhetoric, and has important things to say concerning them. I also found his ideas on education challenging, even as I picked and chose among them.

I reject out of hand his idea that thinking and desultory conversation per se are commonly wastes of time—time that is better spent reading. I believe that it is possible to rely too much on the thoughts of others, i.e., thoughts gained through reading, and that we need to spend more time searching our own depths in introspection and thought. However, this is something I find myself thinking about at length now that I have confronted his ideas—which perhaps proves his point.

The text is full of mini-sermons and aphorisms that speak meaningfully to our time: “Most people are tolerably miserable most of the time”; “The bread of life is more important than the cake”; “American Mormons must exemplify and teach the gospel, not American cultural attitudes”; “Ambition without manipulation is rare indeed”; “Every absence is a little death”; “The absence of death is a dangerous thing”; “Genealogy is important because our families are the extension of ourselves back infinitely and forward infinitely. It is by virtue of them that we are individuals”; “Historians are always biased”; “Literature is not a turning away from life. It is a way into life”; “We need to be unremitting in our study of the best, because our lives are short”; “Sincerity is being oneself without thinking of oneself.”

“One of the worst things that a rhetorician does is to manipulate himself”; “Humor is deeply enshrined in religion; it is one of those things that distinguish the believer from the hypocrite”; “The ways of salvation are not the ways of persuasion, but the ways of conviction”; “If setting goals does nothing else, it will tend to occlude the Holy Ghost”; “Reason is the servant of faith and not the master”; “Art is the example of beyondness”; “The devil’s world is a mechanical one”; “In the long run our greatest difficulty is to be humble enough to put ourselves in the position to be saved.”

In many ways *The Abundance of the Heart* is an important book for our times. It certainly deserves at least one reading.

A COMPANION FOR THE TELEVISION SERIES

UTAH: A PEOPLE'S HISTORY

By Dean L. May

University of Utah Press, 1987.

\$25.00 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper).



Reviewed by Thomas G. Alexander

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Dean May and the University of Utah media department projected a new television series called "A People's History of Utah." At the time, professor May asked a group of historians and others to critique proposed scripts, and some of us were invited to participate as guests in various segments. The U of U filmed much of the series on location, and May provided an engaging television presence.

Professor May and the University of Utah Press designed this book as a companion to the series. As such, it has some strengths and some weaknesses.

First, let me mention some of the strengths. Like most of what Dean May writes, *A People's History* was well written. May makes his points clearly and insightfully, he provides comparative examples, and his arguments are carefully stated.

Utah: A People's History is filled with engaging illustrations, including adequate maps and black and white photographs. Most significant, however, are undoubtedly the reproductions of paintings from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They include Alfred Jacob Miller's watercolor of the 1837 Green River rendezvous, George M. Ottinger's skillful painting of Mormon pioneers camped at Chimney Rock, paintings of the Great Salt Lake by James T. Harwood and Alfred Lambourne, Solomon

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Nunes Carvalho's portrait of Chief Walker, and John Hafen's oil painting of Big Cottonwood Canyon.

The interpretations of nineteenth century political and economic development are quite conventional, with emphasis on the Mormon contribution, the importance of mining, and the contributions of non Mormon immigrants.

Coverage in the book for the nineteenth century is quite adequate for a survey. These are chapters dealing with the physical environment and native peoples, pre-Mormon exploration and occupation, the relationship between the Mormons and the people of the United States, the Americanization of Utah, and non-Mormon immigrants.

On the other hand, the book's treatment of the twentieth century is less than adequate. The chapter on progressive reform (1890s to 1917) is sufficient for a survey, but the entire period from the World War I (1917-18) through World War II (1945) is covered in one chapter. The era since World War II is covered in a short chapter which also projects trends into the future. If May had given the nineteenth century the same cursory treatment, he would have covered the period from Mormon settlement to the Woodruff manifesto in ten pages. More space (3 pages) is allotted to travel over the Hastings Cutoff than to the combined administrations of J. Bracken Lee, George D. Clyde, Calvin M. Rampton, and Scott M. Matheson.

May is to be applauded for not separating cultural life into unrelated chapters as though it were an afterthought and not an integral part of the life of the people. He discusses band con-

certs, choral performances, and dramatic presentations along with architecture, painting, and sculpture in context with political and economic development. For example, he mentions the competition for musical talent and the famous offer made in 1870 by my great-great-grandfather Bishop Henry Hughes of Mendon, promising "Ten acres of the best land in the settlement . . . for a good basso, tenor, and soprano, who . . . would settle in Mendon and attend meetings regularly." "

In an observation which I believe is essentially correct, May finds that the nineteenth century Utah community supported the graphic arts such as painting, writing, and sculpture less generously than they did the performing arts, such as theatre and music. He suggested that the relative absence of the graphic arts resulted from the "closeness to life in the small Mormon town of the period that some found oppressive. It was difficult," he argues, "to be a dissenter and to go one's own way. Community achievement was more highly prized than individual achievement."

Although his observation is insightful, I believe that his interpretation of the reasons for differential support in the arts is mistaken. While dissent may have been difficult in small Mormon communities, it did exist, as Jeff Simmonds, Robert Dwyer, and Ronald Walker have amply documented and as May acknowledges (p. 121).

More to the point, however, to interpret the failure of graphic arts as a consequence of their "dissent" is certainly misplaced emphasis. Numerous historical examples amply document that dissent is not a sine qua non for success in the graphic arts. Shakespeare glorified the reigning Tudors rather than attacking them (witness his characterization of the last Plantagenet, Richard III). Michaelangelo and Leonardo succeeded in large part because of the patronage of powerful aristocrats and the Catholic church.

A more fruitful approach, it seems to me, would have been to examine the market for the graphic arts and to compare Utah culture with the culture of communities of similar size, wealth, and situation. In that comparison we find that Utah was not unique, since graphic artists did not generally succeed in the Mountain West until the twentieth century. Not until after 1896 did Charles M. Russell of Montana turn himself from an itinerant cowboy who sketched for friends into a professional artist, an achievement he did not complete until 1920. Even then, he had to sell paintings in New York to succeed. In New Mexico, it was not until 1916 that artists settled in Taos, the first significant artists' community in the Mountain West.

I would argue, in fact, that the nineteenth century Utah patronized the graphic arts more generously than other Mountain Western communities. A number of graphic artists found work painting scenery in the theatres, several found work in photography, and at least one took his painting on the road in a traveling exhibit. May acknowledges that when the LDS church needed graphic artists to decorate the Salt Lake Temple, it supported a number of them in study in Paris. I would be surprised to find such extensive patronage in other nineteenth century frontier communities.

Nevertheless, in Utah as elsewhere in the Mountain West, the community seems to have supported the performing arts more fully than the graphic arts. As a working hypothesis, I would suggest that rather than prizing community achievement more highly than individual achievement, the community prized individual achievement in the performing arts more than in the graphic arts, and was thus willing to devote greater resources to them.

I would suggest that the reasons lie in the relatively higher value Western culture generally (in the sense of Western Europe and the United States) has placed on the performing than on the graphic arts, at least since the classical revival of the eighteenth century. In that regard, Utah culture was not unlike the larger American culture. This is perhaps because in Western culture the performing arts have a more significant role both in the civil religion and in community and religious ritual and entertainment than the graphic arts.

On balance, however, my reservations about the interpretation of the relative success of the arts and the scanty coverage of twentieth century history are minor in comparison with my praise for the strengths of the book. It is an excellent introduction to the history of the state for the general reader, and the bibliographic essays at the end of each chapter constitute a fine guide to the literature for those interested in studying further.

BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND CHURCH EDUCATION TEACHERS

THE GOSPELS

STUDIES IN SCRIPTURE, VOLUME 5

Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet
Deseret Book Company, 1986, 492 pp., \$15.95



Reviewed by Blake T. Ostler

THIS BOOK IS the fifth in a series of works "intended to enhance and supplement one's personal study of the revelations and truths found in the standard works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." It contains thirty-one essays by twenty-five different authors. The editors have arranged the various chapters by chronological subject, beginning with the Jewish history as backdrop to the Gospels and ending with the Resurrection narratives. The authors are all teachers in the educational program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and they write from the perspective of the "orthodox" faith which accepts the biblical record at its word. Every author accepts the claim that the individual Gospels were written by those whose names they bear and are historically accurate and theologically unified. The essays vary widely in expertise and worth, ranging from scholarly insight that comes only with studied familiarity with the subject matter to unanalyzed rehashing of the New Testament stories.

None of the essays are addressed to an audience familiar with issues in New Testament scholarship. Indeed, the essays generally ignore the significant views of biblical scholarship except to set biblical criticism up as a straw man to be knocked over, for the sake of defending the "gospel." The tendency to denigrate biblical scholarship is especially strong in Richard Lloyd Anderson's treatment of the Gospel of

Luke. Anderson claims that "by distrusting the objectivity of the Gospels, scholars have created a crisis of subjectivity. . . . for this reason the New Testament student will find many current books on the Gospels to be short-sighted. Rather than read heavily in secondary literature, serious students should define people and places with the aid of an up-to-date Bible dictionary and mainly search the Gospels themselves, perhaps with the aid of a harmony printed in parallel columns" (p. 79). Of course, Anderson's own essay becomes irrelevant if such advice is taken seriously.

Robert L. Millet provides a brief overview of the synoptic problem and the two-document hypothesis, but concludes that Latter-day Saints don't need to worry about evidence suggesting that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source document because "it is not difficult to believe that God could reveal the very same words to Matthew and Luke that he inspired Mark to record. In short, one resolution of the problem might well be revelation: all of the Gospel writers were inspired by the very same source. At the same time, it would not be out of harmony with principles of truth for one Gospel writer to utilize the writings of another" (p. 50). Millet seems to espouse a very strong notion of propositional revelation as a "solution" to a problem which he admits shouldn't be a problem to Latter-day Saints. Is the two-document hypothesis a problem simply because it is suggested by scholarship rather than revelation? When confronting the divergence between Gospel writers, however, Millet

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suggests another strategy to understand the differences. Pointing to "prophetic editorial changes" made by Joseph Smith in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants and continuing revision of "the inspired version" of the King James Bible, Millet suggests that "we need to recognize the appropriateness for a writer—even an inspired writer—to add to or take away from his work as he matures or gains new or added perspective" (p. 45). Millet seems to adopt here the view that revelation is not necessarily propositional; rather, the initial expression of the revelation may be augmented by experience and later perspective. Nevertheless, Millet would seem to limit such "targ-umic" or expansionist tendencies to the original Gospel writer. Does not Joseph Smith's "translation" of the Bible suggest that later prophets could also add insight into the works of earlier prophets? In any case, Millet's essay is informative.

There are some outstanding essays in this book for those who are seeking to understand basics. Stephen E. Robinson's essay "The Setting of the Gospels," is an excellent treatment of the salient events and parties involved in Jewish history from the Babylonian exile through the beginning of the New Testament period. The most interesting statement made by Robinson refers to the "ecumenical age" of the second century B.C. Greeks, and concludes that Greeks were open to ecumenism, "since ecumenism is always easiest when people are least certain of their beliefs" (p. 14). I suppose religious intolerance is also easiest when people are most certain of their beliefs.

The essay by S. Kent Brown treating the Gospel of Mark is also first-rate. Though I disagree with his reliance on Patristic writers to establish that the Gospel of Mark was written by Mark under the direct influence of Peter (after all, the Patristic writers had only hearsay tradition as their source), Brown provides some good reasons to believe that Mark was not merely a gatherer of oral traditions. Brown understands the vital issues regarding the authorship of Mark and treats them fairly. His discussion of critical biblical scholarship is outstanding. I can think of no better introduction to the Gospel of Mark which demonstrates both awareness and appreciation of the relevant issues and scholarship and also caution in accepting the assumptions of critical biblical studies. Brown has a sympathy for both scholarship and faith.

Brown restates some persuasive arguments of Martin Hengel regarding the authorship and dating of Mark before the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D. Indeed, Brown implicitly accepts the view that Mark properly identified

the scribes, chief priests and elders as Jesus's "real opponents" rather than the Pharisees identified in Luke and Matthew (p. 66). Probably most biblical scholars maintain that Matthew and Luke have read the struggle of the later church against the Pharisees into Jesus's struggle against the Sadducees. The Pharisees did not have the prominence attributed to them in Matthew and Luke.

J. Phillip Schaelling's essay on the Prologue of John is also noteworthy. He appropriately treats the important aspects of the prologue for Mormon ditheism. Schaelling's demonstrates a trained hermeneutic awareness, evidenced by his careful treatment of the nuances of the Greek words *Logos* and *pistis*. He also effectively uses Mormon scriptures to bring out some legitimate nuances of thought in the Prologue without turning the writer of the Gospel of John (who Schaelling clearly believes is the apostle John) into a modern Mormon. Stephen Ricks's scholarly treatment of the rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth is also worth consideration, as is Rodney Turner's essay on the farewell discourse of Jesus.

There are also some very frustrating essays in this book. How can a scholar as talented as C. Wilfred Griggs ignore the significant differences between the synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John in his overview of "The Testimony of John"? He states, "prejudice and ignorance have combined to prevent modern scholars from giving John similarly high marks [to the Greek historian Thucydides] for the historicity of his Gospel, but such judgments should not overly concern us" (p. 119). If John is an accurate historian, the synoptic writers are not, for the chronological and topographical framework of the Gospel of John is different from the Synoptics. Except for the passion narrative, the Gospel of John has almost no material in common with the Synoptics. John's Gospel is characterized by a struggle between "light" and "dark" which is absent from the Synoptics. John's Gospel portrays Jesus's ministry as beginning jointly with the ministry of John the Baptist, while in the Synoptics Jesus' ministry begins only after John is imprisoned. John envisions a ministry of two or three years, with several visits to Jerusalem. The ministry of Jesus in the Synoptics lasts only one year and includes only one visit to Jerusalem. More importantly, the Jesus of the Synoptics focuses repeatedly on repentance and the kingdom of God realized through Jesus' exorcisms. The Christ in John does not teach about repentance and the kingdom (except in one passage) and there are no exorcisms in the Gospel of John.

Does Griggs believe that such differences are insignificant and unworthy of consideration?

The remainder of the essays are less worthwhile. Many of them show little familiarity even with the text under consideration. The writers often seem to be more familiar with the late Bruce R. McConkie's commentary on the New Testament than with the texts they treat. Apostle McConkie's commentary is quoted more often than any other source, with the exception of the New Testament itself. There are surprisingly few quotes from James E. Talmage's *Jesus the Christ*, and even fewer from non-Mormon scholars. Some writers do little more than rehash their subject texts with little evidence of research or analysis.

In the final analysis, *The Gospels* is important because it is a foray into biblical commentary by Church Education teachers (those writers who do not teach in the Church Education System are BYU teachers involved in teaching biblical languages). Those serious about understanding the Gospels within an accurate context could profitably consult the Anchor Bible Series. Those interested in an insightful and spiritual appreciation of the person of Jesus as presented in the Gospels should reread *Jesus the Christ*. However, with the exception of those essays specifically noted, the serious student should take Richard L. Anderson's advice to spend their time reading the New Testament itself in a parallel column format and avoid wasting time on the mediocre essays about it contained in *The Gospels*.

THE SUNSTONE FOUNDATION

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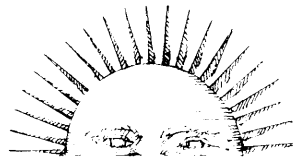
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