Epperson has given us a small masterpiece in discussing a Christian theology of Israel that accords to Judaism the status of a valid road to God.

BRILLIANTLY CONCEIVED AND elegantly executed, this examination of nineteenth-century Mormon thinking about Israel, the Jewish people, uncovers Joseph Smith's, Orson Hyde's, and Brigham Young's hitherto unappreciated, affirmative conception of the enduring validity of Israel's vocation. A mind of extraordinary independence and originality, Smith himself defied the conventional attitudes of his day, which took as definitive the ancient supersessionism and dismissed the Jews as cursed by God. Prophetically, he envisioned a return of Israel to its land. Also, Orson Hyde's pilgrimage to and prayer on the Mount of Olives, commemorated thirty years later by a rite of the next generation, gave concrete expression to that same prophecy. Here is a Christian theology of Israel that accords to the Jewish people dignity and to Judaism the status of a valid road to God, long before conceptions of anti-Semitic teaching culminating in the Holocaust persuaded Christian churches to reconsider the matter. Other contemporary millennialists, for example, returned to the scriptures of ancient Israel without reconsidering the living community of Judaism in the way Joseph Smith and Brigham Young did. So far as I know, Orson Hyde must rank unique as the first Christian to pray for Israel's return to Zion; and it was Joseph Smith who sent him on that mission to Israel.

Epperson summarizes his findings at the outset: "The sum of Smith's contribution was the creation of an independent Christian theology of Israel, which affirmed the autonomy, integrity, and continuity of covenant Israel—embodied in the life and witness of the Jewish people" (viii). That conception would compete with the more conventional one of an Israel rejected by God, Judaism superseded by Christianity, and the Jews as a people lacking a religion at all. What is surprising is not the conventional but the fresh: What emerges from these assembled texts and sketches is a picture both clear and strange. On the American frontier in the 1840s, a Christian religious leader was editing a newspaper which featured articles on modern Jewry and its concerns... At the same time, this leader was affirming in the scriptural language available to him a renaissance of Jewish institutions and national life independent of any necessary connection to the Church of Christ. By focusing on such notions as a city, a temple, a renewed priestly order, and acts of sacrifice, and by insisting on their literal restoration, Smith calibrated his rhetoric to jar assumptions about present-day Israel and the assumed homogeneity of the coming millennial kingdom ruled by the universal church. At the heart of Smith's vision was an affirmation "that the election of the promised seed still continues... That promise had room for both the Israelite whose 'election was pertaining to the flesh' and the gentile... It was the vindication of God's promises, not the Saints' presumptions, which Smith sought in this work" (132–33).

Joseph Smith's tradition, renewed and enhanced by Brigham Young, competed with views of Orson Pratt, who sought the conversion of the Jews as a precondition to the end of days: "[T]he ultimate destiny of the Jewish people was identity with the Saints through their conversion to the Church of Christ and its gospel message as taught to them by Mormon elders" (193). Epperson finds that those who took this other position—the Pratts, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon—"inherited exegetical principles and prejudices from those sources" of conventional Christianity that they brought with them to the Latter-day Saints: "These hopes and expectations [for Israel's conversion], shorn of any necessary connection to the semi-nary professors who were their contemporaries" (196). Smith, Young, and Hyde innovated, bringing to the Latter-day Saints...
ideas and attitudes quite opposed to the conventions of the day, forming a theology of Israel akin to that of Vatican II, but nearly a century and a half earlier. In this regard, Brigham Young took a position that Christianity in general would attain only in the aftermath of the Holocaust: "Jews and gentiles will not be obliged to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." (200). Epperson describes Young's construction of human, religion, and cosmic orders as "eternally pluralistic. . . . Membership in the church was not the inexorable, universal goal of humankind" (200). It was only with the formation of such a theology of difference that the pluralistic character of relationships among religions would become plausible.

Epperson's own view of matters emerges when, commenting on his findings, he reflects,

There persists in the LDS community to this day an elective affinity with the Jewish people, an affinity forced by a comparable quest for a territorial patrimony, an autonomous state, and a unique culture. Latter-day Saints recognize the enduring debt owed to Israel's historical, covenantal heritage. Without it there could have been no "restoration of all things," no temples, no community, no abiding quest for Zion on this earth (213).

Not only so, but Islam, Judaism, and Mormonism share the conviction that the Bible as we know it, Old and New Testaments, forms a flawed or imperfect revelation, requiring a further, perfect revelation in the Quran (for Islam), the excommunication of the New Testament and the inclusion of the Oral Torah (Judaism), and the provision of the Book of Mormon and other revealed writings of LDS provenience. The points of comparability and commensurate character prove not only mythic or political but substantive in a structural, religious framework as well.

That is all the more reason to deplore the predominance of the other theory of Israel, not the theory of Smith, Young, and Hyde. Whether or not Roseanne Barr's widely circulated memoir of growing up Jewish in Mormon, anti-Semitic Salt Lake City accords with how things were or are, Jews.
throughout the country find themselves besieged by Mormon missionaries, who persist in asking them to give up God's revelation in the Torah in favor of apostasy to another religion. The offense unperceived, the impertinence unacknowledged, the insult to an ancient and vital faith most sincerely intended, the missionary message conflicts with the doctrines Epperson lays out with the authority of scholarship and the passion of faith. He writes with craft and care; he speaks with humility; in the framework of his subject and his sources, he has given us a small masterpiece.

A PERSONAL word may prove illuminating. The first time I lectured at Brigham Young University, my topic, Pharisaism in the first century, spelled out in four academic lectures, interested only a few. The question periods after each lecture provided an exercise in practical missiology for young Mormons. I was the designated candidate, they, the aggressive proselytizers, and the protracted question periods, for four successive days, concerned only, what does a Jew say to this argument? and how can we devise a compelling answer to that negative response? In the end I wondered why my hosts had gone to so much trouble to bring me to undergo so sustained and demeaning a public roast. I left with the impression that all the Mormons wanted to know about the Jews was why we were not Mormons. When the Mormons sought permission to build their center in Jerusalem, I therefore took note, in the Jerusalem Post, that they have written a long record of persistent missions to Israel, the Jewish people, marked by an utter absence of regard for our religion, the Torah.

But God does not leave us standing still. People change, and God changes us. So I hasten to add that subsequent visits to Provo have proved far more productive, with the tradition here expounded by Epperson coming to the surface, and the possibility of a genuine religious dialogue among people who share a single reading of religion and a common reading of what scripture has delivered to us, but also what scripture has left for other writings to hand on as well. Epperson's definitive work, both the historical and the theological chapters, lays sturdy foundations for the construction of a two-way street, one that both religious communities, each a pilgrim people, stubborn in its faith, eternal in its quest to serve and love God with and through intelligence (which is God's glory), may share as they trek toward that common goal that Israelite prophecy has defined for us all.

ONE BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL VOICE
CRAZY FOR LIVING
by Linda Sillitoe
Signature Books, 1993
56 pages, $10.95

Reviewed by Virginia Baker

Sillitoe holds nothing back in this book; she writes about life, its fabric coarse and fine and as wildly diverse as truth itself—which is, perhaps, why the whole cloth rings so true.

IT'S A STRANGE predicament, when, instead of talking or listening, smiling or scowling, pleading or arguing or even weeping with one another, that we often have to open a book to share our deepest experiences and emotions.

We are such private creatures.

And it isn't only in Happy Valley that we shut off ourselves politely (and yet brutally) from one another. Wherever fragile human creatures dwell, we wear our varied armors—spiritual and emotional, social and sometimes even physical—to guard against the simple, necessary act of being touched, of being changed in any way by a voice and a vision different from our own.

Thank God, then, for artists—poets and musicians and painters and writers and all the rest of heaven's candor-crazed judges and jesters—who take great pains (and often great risks) to point out where we are different and, more important, where we are not.

Linda Sillitoe's Crazy for Living succeeds best at exactly this. Speaking with a voice that runs over a broad emotional landscape (from lullabies to the keening of true sorrow; from sophisticated intelligence to a childlike wisdom that cuts utterly and even bloodlessly with its clarity), Sillitoe strips us entirely of past doctrine, dogma, culture, and societies—and touches us not as citizens or members or even brothers and sisters, but as human beings.

There is no holding back in this book. She could not touch us this way if she held anything back. What Sillitoe writes about is life, its fabric coarse and fine and as wildly diverse as truth itself—which is, perhaps, why the whole cloth rings so true.

In one volume, Sillitoe roams in singular journeys ranging from simple descriptions of the native Utah landscape to the spiritual heart of a reluctant heretic. She comes home as lover and mother, to bear children and dreams and to miscarry both. She reads prophecies on the face of the moon and is chosen by the eagle. She pays her "respects by saying what's true / in love and anger," and
even confronts the ghost (and the sins) of a killer.

It is heady music. Even when the tones pass into discord and show us the inevitable ugliness hidden under the veneer of our steady, beautiful world, this music heals. Sillitoe's strength lies in showing us the similarities in all that is dissimilar—where our simple, common humanity is our one constant gift.

Certain passages stun the senses and the mind, and, quite often, the spirit. Consider these stanzas:

nor could you approach
this land unrecognized: here
a sane man lives by his heart.
a crazy man lives in his head.
(from "Killer")

I tell you this, my loud and little daughter,
you have now all there is: familiar dark,
a blanket's wings without, warm milk
within,
balanced with your head in my hands
cup . . .
(from "A Lullaby in the New Year")

or

what in my bones knit you
within me still weaves magic.
sleep now. here is the sign
more ancient than memory.
here is the turn of the tide.
(from "Charm for a Sick Child")

or

during we do violence, our conversation
leaves
us blue with shock . . .
owe all invented rules for each other.
now we huddle and circle. we fly as if
unaware
that an explosion coils in every flower's
heart.

(“crazy for living”)

Whatever the subject, Crazy for Living is entirely honest, sparing nothing—especially the author herself. So many of us have lived a half-life for so long, inadvertently or selectively, that it is doubly good to sit in private with these pieces—to laugh and cry, question and ache, burn with anger and tremble with fear, to kiss a child and cherish or lose a love: in a word, to live.

Crazy for Living lives and breathes life on its own—and then invites us to the dance. Any reader who opens the cover and turns the pages cannot help but find the rhythm and the steps there irresistible to follow. In every case, this book plays us like the fine and varied instruments we have somehow forgotten we are. And though most of us will never have met the author face-to-face, she peers over every page: laughing/crying, comforting/angry, foolish/wise—and always pointing back out at us as every rich line unfolds. It's the kind of thing we wish we could hear over the pulpit during testimony meetings, but somehow never do—and fear we someday might.

It goes beyond our social veneers. That is its strength. Its beauty lies in Sillitoe's voice, which is rich, powerful, and gives utterly, holding nothing back. In those heavy hours when we find we cannot, of ourselves, share or even admit to weakness and fear, hope and desire—this is the book to read, where one brave voice does it for us.

WOUNDED JESUS

Count. One hundred ten coal cars
Rumbling down Monashee Pass,
Flattening Mercury in silver. This
Was in the days I believed talismans
Could set right even a crippled horse;
A dime then was a precious waste
But Jesus was my friend, an old Waler
My father bought for twenty dollars
Because back then not all fathers were
Heartless—mine never laid a hand on me
Except to shake me once, more in fear
For his son than anger when I triggered
My twelve gauge crossing a fence and
Blew the bill from my cap.
I flattened twelve dimes on that Monashee
Line and stitched them into Jesus' bridle
Because there were twelve apostles
And I believed numbers then could set
Right even a crippled horse.
Oh, I didn't rely completely on magic—
I could shoe; I'd pound them out light,
Drill the holes for calks where I thought
The heels over-reached the bulbs but Jesus
Got worse so I tried jumping clips which meant
I was hotshoeing all the time. My father never
Once talked me down for spending so much time,
Money and craftsmanship on this twenty dollar
Horse but when the time finally come I let
Jesus eat a basket of soft, sweet apples.
Then I let my father walk him down to the river.

—SEAN BRENDAN-BROWN
RECENTLY RELEASED

Compiled by Will Quist
This section features recent titles from the Mormon press; the descriptions are often taken from promotional materials. Submissions are welcome, especially for books of LDS interest not by major LDS publishers. SUNSTONE neither promotes nor sells these titles.

ARTS

In fifteen topical chapters, "it has been our privilege to capture in print the state of the fine arts in Utah."

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Studevant Leavitt, Mary Brown Pulsipher, Mary Adeline Reman Noble, Martha Pense Jones Thomas, and Eliza Dana Gibbs; Nancy Alexander Tracy, Eliza Partridge Smith Lyman, Emily Partridge Smith Young, and Mary A. Phelps Rich.


"Little-known information" about nineteen dissenters, ranging from David Whitmer to Sonia Leavitt.


A biography of a Mormon senator and "a compelling look at twenty years of American political history and its pivotal decisions."


"Experiences of a clerk and physician; includes Brigham Young, the Utah Army, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and England."


This counselor to Joseph Smith is "illuminated in a profoundly thoughtful and original essay... followed by documents."

CHRISTIAN LIVING

For LDS women who feel they fall short in their "efforts to measure up, to fulfill expectations, to reach toward perfection."


"Newlyweds and veterans alike can use [survey information from sixty couples] to identify and discuss their problems."


"Brings together some of the finest of those talks... pertinent to women's concerns in the latter days."

HISTORY

Traces "an increasing reaction of the Mormons against their own successful assimilation" through selected topics.


A victim of Mark Hofmann—one of the century's two most important forgers"-discusses Hofmann and others and their work.


"Mormonism's religious precepts and practices, its social, economic, and cultural activities [from] the past and the present."

In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo. Carol Cornwall Madison, Deseret Book, hb, 266 pages, $14.95.

General and specific introductions are provided for these selections from diaries, letters, and reminiscences.


"Combines many years of research and field study by some of the foremost authorities on... Utah's historic routes of exploration, trade, and emigration."

SCRIPTURE

Provides "answers to many questions about the olive in religious symbolism and about the allegory" in Jacob 5.


Matches biblical and modern messages to show "how God helps and blesses his people in similar ways throughout the ages."


"Speakers on the Old Testament confirm again that it is both exciting and entirely relevant to our modern world."

THEOLOGY

"How will we recognize the Lord's latter-day servant and what will be the signs of his coming?"


"About the present conflict in the Mormon community regarding academics and feminists" and related issues.


Roberts' theology, comprehensively explained near the close of his life.


"Brings together many of the choice and timeless expressions from general authorities' talks given to the Relief Society."