

Lowry Nelson's Utah

In the Direction of His Dreams, Memoirs by Lowry Nelson (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc. 1986), 370 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by F. Ross Peterson, professor of history at Utah State University.

LOWRY NELSON WAS ONE of Utah's greatest intellectual products. At age ninety-three, this, the final volume of an autobiographical trilogy rounds off *Boyhood in a Mormon Village* and *Eighty: One Man's Way There*. Nelson's new volume completes a study that transcends one man's life. The internationally renowned rural sociologist vividly recalls his childhood in Ferron, Utah, and traces the path that led him to prominence.

With amazing candor, clarity, humility, and grace, Nelson condenses nine decades into an inspiring and uplifting chronicle. He cleverly combines family history and a sense of community to describe life as a pioneer in Emery County at the turn of the century. His education was characterized by a near-obsession to learn and see and experience. His descriptions of both Brigham Young University and Utah State in their youth are poignant and refreshing. The vivid recollections of travelling by train within Utah and by car to California and Wisconsin long before pavement are insightful and amusing.

However, the indisputable charm of this book is the manner in which Lowry

Nelson underplays his own importance and significance. As a pioneer in agricultural extension work, a New Deal administrator, a member of the International Labor Organization, and a scholar, Nelson never indulges in self-adulation. He writes about those upset by his studies of rural Utah, barely mentioning the rave scholarly reviews. He assumes that the reader is aware of the impact of his *A Mormon Village*, so he hardly mentions it.

In two instances, Nelson reveals details of his well-known disagreements with the LDS hierarchy. As a professor at BYU, he was the focal point of a serious academic freedom issue. Upon losing the battle and after numerous meetings with Church leaders, he concluded that academic freedom was not possible at BYU. That is one reason he joined the New Deal's Resettlement Administration. Years later, he confronted Church leaders over the denial of priesthood to blacks. His exchange of letters, included here, provide interesting documentation of racial perceptions of the 1940s.

It was remarkable that Lowry Nelson was still producing prose and poetry up to last year. It is also important to realize that he has much to say about how human beings should work together for survival. His editor should have caught some trivial mistakes such as having the Wilson-Roosevelt-Taft election in 1908 instead of 1912, and locating Johnston's Army still in Sanpete County in 1867. They are minor problems in a memoir of such significance.

LDS Assumptions

Speaker for the Dead by Orson Scott Card (New York: Tor Books, 1986), 415 pp. \$15.95 hardcover; *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card (New York: Tor Books, 1986), 357 pp. \$3.50 paperback (rpt. of 1985 Tor hard cover original).

Reviewed by Michael R. Collings, DIALOGUE's poetry editor, writer, and faculty member at Pepperdine University, Los Angeles.

THE ONLY MAJOR LDS science-fiction writer, Orson Scott Card recently won the

Nebula Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America for *Ender's Game* (1985) and nominations for the Hugo Award. *Speaker for the Dead* has already been nominated for the 1986 Nebula.

This recognition is important because *Speaker for the Dead* and *Ender's Game* show Card as an intensely LDS writer, but at the level of assumption rather than assertion. While his themes express deeply held LDS beliefs, his novels do not intrude those beliefs upon readers. Instead, readers following Ender Wiggin thousands of years into the future will perceive fundamental questions of human salvation and redemption as analogues to gospel principles.

Ender's Game and *Speaker* demonstrate Card's mastery. Elements criticized in earlier novels—violence and destructive sexuality, for example—draw less attention because they are inherent in the novels' purposes. Ender kills, but only to

save an alien race and his own humanity and to complete the cycle of awareness, guilt, and redemption. His extraordinary talent isolates him from humanity in *Ender's Game*; in *Speaker*, he works painfully back into the community of *ramen* (sentient beings).

Card balances action with thought, science fiction with archetype, science with faith. The novels explore religion as subject and religious individuals as characters yet avoid polemics or stereotypes; the Christ-figure, for example, must stand at the foot of an alien cross to crucify another savior. Such inversions are so carefully paced that *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead* succeed equally as SF adventure and as analogical explorations of humanity, morality, salvation, and redemption. LDS readers will find much that is thought-provoking, stimulating, and spiritually moving in both novels.

Woman-child

Learn of Me, Relief Society Course of Study (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987), 360 pp.

Reviewed by Ann Weaver Hart, assistant professor, Department of Educational Administration, University of Utah.

AS A TEENAGER I read my dad's old priesthood manual written by T. Edgar Lyon. Later I found even older manuals for MIA and Sunday School by other Mormon authors such as E. E. Ericksen and B. H. Roberts. I benefitted from these thoughtful lessons, written to guide people on a spiritual journey toward a deeper understanding of the gospel of Christ.

Unlike these older books, the 1987 women's Relief Society course of study, *Learn of Me*, is uneven. The lessons with clear gospel themes are strong and straightforward. However, some other lessons are virtually useless as aids to religious instruction for adults. Additionally, the image of

Mormon women in this course of study is out of sync with that being presented to our young women in YWMIA materials and presentations. This dichotomy sets up a psychological double bind that will be difficult for some to resolve.

The fifty lessons are organized into five groups: Spiritual Living (twenty-two), Home and Family Education (twelve), Compassionate Service/Social Relations (twelve), Supplemental lessons (four: "Personal Morality," "Safeguarding Our Children," "Reverence for Life," and "Fighting Drug Abuse"), and Home Management (twelve). Fourteen of these lessons are conference addresses by General Authorities.

The manual has many good moments. The best lessons focus on the life of Christ, his mission on earth, the atonement, and the resurrection. And they are wonderful. The anonymous authors provide a rich journey into faith—the awe and joy we feel when we contemplate Christ, his mis-