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Book Notes

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Book Notes

CHARLES Y. GLOCK AND RODNEY STARK. *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1965. Pp. 316. \$6.00.

The vitality of religion in a changing world is the central subject of a series of statistical studies and essays by the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley. More questions are raised than answered. The authors view religion as the product of social conditioning and even challenge the compatibility of social science and religion as systems of truth on the ground that religion makes man ultimately accountable for acts that sociology shows are determined by environment. The conflict is overstated to the degree that the book overstates sociology as a "science." Generalization is also a problem: The inverse ratio of academic achievement and religious conviction is not necessarily true for every religion, since Mormon belief evidently stimulates rather than impedes scientific careers (cf. p. 287). Nevertheless, the book tends to show that traditional religion is not dominant as the source of values and social control in modern society. This may be evidence that a real reformation of popular religion is taking place, quite apart from ecclesiastical and theological conferences.

The most original part of this work is the chapter on "The New Denominationalism," which rests on a random sample of 3,000 Northern Californians and makes possible an up-to-date discussion of the anatomy of belief. The secularization of society discussed in other chapters is evident, as are also wide differences of belief within denominations that make the authors sociologically pessimistic of any widespread Protestant ecumenical action. Of interest to Latter-day Saints are the following trends: An obviously necessary high rate of belief in God and Christ by American Christians continues. However, inconsistency is evident in the application of certain doctrines, and most of all among liberalizing churches: Congregationalists, Methodists, and Episcopalians. Only about a third of the members of these groups accept Biblical miracles or have

basic confidence in the Second Advent. Yet the more theologically centered denominations—Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists—are precisely those who are less likely to see love for or good to one's fellowmen as essential to salvation. So American Protestantism poses the dilemma of choosing between the first and second commandments, an election between theology and ethics that Latter-day Saint belief has always opposed. In fact, about 40% of American Protestants and Catholics see no relationship between salvation and love for or good to others, and when questioned as to their degree of certainty in finding "the answers to the meaning and purpose of life," approximately the same number of both groups are uncertain. This data, plus the normal human inaction in applying stated beliefs, raises doubts about the effectiveness of traditional religions to apply Christ's commands to assist those in need. As far as the economics of good will, about 10% of American Christians think that tithing is necessary to salvation. Despite a lack of theological sophistication in framing these questions, this survey undoubtedly illustrates current trends in applied religion.

ALMA P. BURTON (ed.), *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Third edition. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1965. Pp. 280. \$3.95.

Although private interpretations of what an "edition" is plagues Mormon publishers, this third edition of Burton's compilation is significantly revised. It thereby assumes more importance as the best topical collection of Joseph Smith's discourses now available. The book is expanded by something like ten percent in the average chapter, with certain new chapters and topical breakdowns included, the most interesting of which is a collection of eye-witness descriptions and evaluations by contemporaries who met the Prophet. Certainly the core of Joseph Smith's teachings is here, classified and easily accessible. The importance of this approach cannot be overstressed. It is doubtful, for instance, whether the student of L.D.S. Church History will grasp the motivation of the Prophet until he turns to the collected statements on love, which Joseph Smith defined in terms of "long-suffering, forbearance and patience" toward everyone, with the result of "greater liberality" of thought and conduct of its possessor, who uses every opportunity "to bless the whole human race."

There are two weaknesses in the Burton compilation. The first is inherent in any compilation that aspires to less than comprehensiveness. That is, isolated comments often reported at random are not the measure of Joseph Smith's thought. As a single illustration, under the heading of truths made known by the Prophet, there is one statement of opinion on the hundred and forty-four thousand of the Book of Revelation. Although this gives the reader the impression of knowing what Joseph Smith thought on the subject, there are actually a half-dozen important statements that need to be correlated in reconstructing the Prophet's opinion. The second weakness is that the topical approach has not been applied adequately. For example, while those descriptions of the pre-mortal council that the book includes are classified generally under the chapter on "The Plan of Salvation," a key quote labelled "The Contention in Heaven" is put in an entirely different chapter on "Salvation and Exaltation." There are many more examples, perhaps illustrative of the need of a cross-referencing system in future editions. Likewise, it seems that catch-all chapters

as "Interesting Truths Made Known" and the "Maxims" and "Sayings of the Prophet" should be subjected to the same classification that is the strength of the book.

