ARTHUR HENRY KING. *Arm the Children: Faith's Response to a Violent World.* Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1998. xxiii; 347 pp. Appendix, index. $21.95.

Reviewed by Terrance D. Olson

The first precept I heard from the lips of Arthur Henry King was that an author is revealed by his work. Attitudes, prejudices, morality, commitments—all are unfolded in the works of any given author. At the very least, this expanded and edited volume, which draws upon Arthur Henry King's earlier work, *The Abundance of the Heart*,[1] reveals the man without being overtly autobiographical. Yet even his name unfolds key points of his academic and personal history. Arthur, a king, a legend; Henry the King, echoes of Shakespeare. As a Shakespearean scholar, he was unmatched. If this work reveals the man, he was a man of firm convictions, of great humility, and of guilelessness. He made the historical, the cultural, the philosophical accessible. In this book, this convert to the LDS faith affirms the life-changing experience of finding the Restoration of the gospel and then draws upon the understanding brought by it to recast the meaning of academic inquiry, tradition, judgment, language, education, effective writing, and wholeness. King—perhaps best described here as Brother Arthur Henry King—reveals how relentlessly transforming the fact of the Restoration is. His work invites the reader to see everything as measured by the gospel of Jesus Christ, whether the simplest issues of everyday life or the larger themes permeating a culture. The work prompts reflection and renewal after it has been devoured.

King's conversion story sets the stage—in both personal history and testimony—for the credibility of the rest of the chapters. His was not a life that skimmed the surface nor waded in shallow water. His reaction to academic life prior to his conversion, his finding so many ideas and approaches wanting, parallels the spiritual quest of a C. S. Lewis. He offers quick summaries of situations and contexts in order to get to the point that the world needed a restoration of religious truth. For example, upon arrival at Cambridge, he found "a generation trying to make the experience of literature and the other arts a substitute for religion" (30). But they cannot replace religion because of the difference between science and religion: "the ideas we have about the physical universe change; it is the moral and religious truths that are permanent" (31). He found that "modern world culture has socially denied the virtue of the individual; it is reducing human beings to a mechanism; it has allowed power to proliferate without control; and it has also allowed moral behavior to decline without control" (60). In other words, without the Restoration, confusion is abundant; with the Restoration, wholeness is possible.

King also offers generalizations that serve as both starting points and conclusions regarding issues and answers, principles and practices:

> Today, we are living in a world that, having gone down from religious principles, is looking for an escape. That is why we have drugs and gambling. . . . They are a substitute. They are a means of being able to endure a life that is unendurable outside the gospel. My own experience is that life is unendurable outside the gospel. That is the kind of thing that we have to get home to our young people. (63)

> It is not possible to live at the level that the Lord requires except through religion. Leave a society to act on the moral level, and it will decline, as society in the West during the last two hundred years has declined. (145)

In spite of criticizing many aspects of modern culture and of contemporary academic life, King has not abandoned the world. He seeks to sound the trumpet of alarm with clarity. He knows that we came to earth to do God's will and that it is possible to do so. But the opposition to the simplicity of truth is everywhere. We are to address this world gone awry, then correct it and revise it. Consequently, King uses current issues to illustrate his vision of how the world should and could be, if only we would be true. Gospel obedience, knowledge, and understanding relate to patriotism, friendship, identity in a tradition, language and rhetoric, literature, education, writing, and family history. Children deserve to be armed with this understanding, lest they become "of the world."

President Gordon B. Hinckley recently defended the Church's involvement in educational institutions such as BYU and Ricks College by explaining that while we can't help everyone receive an education at a Church school, the value of the enterprise justifies the Church helping as many as possible.[2] Some had wondered whether it matters that we help anyone at all. Arthur Henry King's general assessment of universities affirms the need:

> I have been a member of several universities, and I have visited some two hundred. And I can assure you that the outstanding feature of the faculty of universities is an extraordinary immaturity that springs from self-regard, the praise given by others, arrogance, the belief in one's own powers—any of these things will bring it about. It is more difficult to grow up when one is clever. (272)

In contrast, King offers a foundation for "The Idea of a Mormon University" (271):

> On the other hand, there is the Mormon tradition. For us, all learning is for God's sake, not for its own sake. As soon as we speak of learning for its own sake, we set up learning as an idol independent of God. The Mormon tradition is supremely one of work, work for the Lord and others—service. Work is the second great virtue. Caring or love is the first, and work should spring from caring. The object of a Mormon university must be to build the

> kingdom of God, to serve the Church in the full sense of what that implies. Because we believe in the Church, because we believe it to be the most important organization on this earth, because we believe it to be the instrument of God's will, because we believe that Christ is its head, we must therefore believe that any organization that the Church sets up must finally and ultimately serve the Church. We are servants in that full sense of the word as it is used in the New Testament. (273)

King's philosophy is resonant with President Hinckley's affirmation of the value of a Church education.

King's statement of how a Church university should be founded on the mission of the Church is then used by King to suggest that BYU, for all the good it does, has not arrived. King suggests the BYU community has work to do if it is to be true to the purposes for which it was founded and if it is to fulfill the goal of offering an education in the Restoration to as many as can be helped.

This book is encyclopedic in its organization, which is logical, given that it is a presentation of thoughts given at various times and in diverse settings. But the editors have honed an offering that is consistent in tone, focus, and purpose. That is, the reader could take a topic, almost at random, and by reading the chosen chapter be exposed to the fundamentals essential to understanding the issues of that topic. The ideas are rigorous and elegant. However, the two crucial chapters, for those who want a springboard for understanding the whole of the book, are the first chapter and the story of King's conversion, for they provide a map to understand where the author is coming from—or more directly, "a reason for the hope that is in [him]" (JST 1 Peter 3:15).

Finally, I have reflected on whom this book is for. "Arm the children" sounds like a call to parents and teachers—but it is neither a parenting book nor an educational handbook. "Faith's response to a violent world" suggests it is a manual on turning principles into practices. But it is not a book which brandishes skill-building or gaining knowledge as a means of making one's way in the world. The depth and breadth of the book is that it is an expression of a man whose way of being in the world unfolds by his reflections on how the restored gospel transforms the meaning of everyday life and of our grand purposes here. Our salvation and our happiness hinge on being persons of commitment to light and truth. The world seems constantly to offer counterfeits to that light. The pure hearted can tell the difference. When those seeking to be pure in heart raise children, teach in homes and schools, are administrators in organizations, or seek to understand art, literature, or language, they see possibilities and understandings to which the worldly are blind. Arthur Henry King offers a light which helps illuminate. One measure of his success is that by the end of the book

the reader discovers he or she has been turned not to the author, but to Christ; not to procedures, policies, or rules, but to the grand invitation to see earthly experience by being in the Restoration.

[We regret to note the departure of Arthur Henry King from this world on January 15, 2000—Ed.]

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1. Arthur Henry King, *The Abundance of the Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986).
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Why We Do Some of the Things We Do," *Ensign* 29 (November 1999): 52–53.