

*Nauvoo: Mormon City on the Mississippi River*, by Raymond Bial (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006)

Although only forty-four pages, Raymond Bial's well-written children's history *Nauvoo: Mormon City on the Mississippi River* is much more than a history of Nauvoo. Bial, who is also an accomplished photographer, has illustrated the book with his own lavish photographs that capture the essence of "the city beautiful" and its surroundings.

Bial does not limit his history to a discussion of Nauvoo; in a few short pages, he addresses the broader sweep of early LDS history, including the First Vision, the founding of the Church, the subsequent development of the Church in Kirtland, the Missouri persecutions and the expulsion of the Saints, and the early settlement of Nauvoo. Bial's summary of the Book of Mormon narrative is particularly well done, as is his discussion of Church teachings and doctrines. Apart from a few minor errors, his history is accurate, and he relates the events leading to the settlement of Nauvoo in a compelling manner.

Following the persecution of the Saints in Missouri, the Prophet Joseph, as quoted by Bial, wanted nothing more than to "find a resting place for a little season at least" (19); and this, the author suggests, they found in Nauvoo. Anxious to accommodate the Missouri refugees as well as new converts from the British Isles, Joseph Smith acquired "large parcels of land" (20) and had the marshy swamps or "flats" drained. The city grew quickly, and by 1844 Nauvoo had become one of the largest communities in Illinois.

The author characterizes Nauvoo as "a small kingdom tucked in the western corner of the state" of Illinois (24).

Most homes were built of logs; approximately two hundred structures, however, were built of the characteristic red brick. Particularly interesting is Bial's discussion of Nauvoo's artisans and craftsmen whose shops are the subject of many of his photographs. He captures the thriving nature of Nauvoo and its citizens, mentioning such people as Jonathan Browning, who "invented one of the earliest repeating rifles" (23), and whose gunsmith shop was located on the city's Main Street. Bial's discussion of the Relief Society organization in the Prophet Joseph's Red Brick Store, the Pendleton Log School on Kimball Street, and the Seventies Hall that housed the Nauvoo library contribute to a complete portrait of community life in the Latter-day Saint city.

As suggested by Bial, the most "ambitious undertaking" for the Saints in Nauvoo was the construction of the temple. Bial relates the history of the temple's construction as well as its subsequent destruction by fire and tornado. The author also recounts, in poignant detail, the murder of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the persecution of the Saints, and their final exodus in 1845 and 1846. Bial emphasizes the palpable sense of loss experienced by the Saints who were forced to abandon their homes. As stated by Bathsheba Smith: "My last act in that precious spot was to tidy the rooms, sweep up the floor, and set the broom in its accustomed place behind the door. Then with emotions in my heart . . . I gently closed that door and faced an unknown future" (35).

In 1849, several years following the departure of the Latter-day Saints from Nauvoo, the Icarians, "followers of the French philosopher Etienne Cabet" (41), established a utopian community in Nauvoo, and Bial tells the story of their efforts to create a home

for themselves in the former city of the Saints. The author also discusses the 1860 establishment of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the Midwest, and efforts by Emma, the Prophet Joseph's widow, to create a new life for herself in Nauvoo.

Bial goes on to accurately summarize the history and growth of the LDS Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Appropriately enough, he brings the story full circle and concludes his history with a discussion of efforts, beginning in the 1960s, to restore Nauvoo. The author of several children's histories, Bial has written an even-handed yet very sympathetic and moving history of Nauvoo. His book is appropriate not only for children but for anyone new to LDS history.

—John M. Murphy

*The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of the Teachings of Jesus and How They Have Been Corrupted*, by Obery M. Hendricks Jr. (New York: Doubleday, 2006)

Obery Hendricks Jr. is a professor of biblical interpretation at the New York Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. As a young man, Hendricks withdrew himself from Christian religions; his discovery of what he calls the "revolutionary Jesus" brought him back.

This book analyzes Jesus' teachings in light of the social, economic, and political conditions of his day. From this analysis, Hendricks outlines and explains seven political strategies that Jesus employed, namely: treat the people's needs as holy, give a voice to the voiceless, expose the workings of oppression, call the demon by name, save your anger for the mistreatment of others, take blows without returning

them, and do not just explain the alternative but show it. In the latter half of his book, he applies these political strategies as well as his own personal opinions to analyze and criticize current political practices in the United States.

For readers interested in a non-LDS perspective of the role of Jesus and other biblical prophets as political revolutionaries, this book will be especially interesting. In particular, the political critic who appreciates new, contemporary, even controversial views of Jesus' politics and their application in the world today will be rewarded.

—Saul A. Speirs

*Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, volume 3 in *Studies on the Book of Abraham* (FARMS: Provo, Utah, 2005)

This volume's twelve articles analyze the Book of Abraham, contributing significantly to needed research on this scripture. Most of the articles were presented at a FARMS conference in 1999 and are published now for the first time. Here serious scholarly study of the Book of Abraham is made accessible to nonspecialists. Topics covered include the historicity of the Book of Abraham, meanings and symbols in covenants, and literary aspects of the text.

The first two articles deal with astronomy in the Book of Abraham. John Gee, William Hamblin, and Daniel Peterson combine to argue skillfully, on six grounds, that the view of stars and of the heavens found in the Book of Abraham is completely at home in the geocentric cosmic view that held sway from the time of the Egyptians down to the time of Copernicus, before the worldview became dominated by a heliocentric cosmology. J. Ward Moody, professor of physics