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**J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.**

## BOOK REVIEW

**J. REUBEN CLARK: THE PUBLIC YEARS.** By Frank W. Fox. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press and Deseret Book Company. 1980. Pp. 689. \$11.50.

*Reviewed by Robert E. Riggs\**

In the field of legal education, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., is identified with a vigorous, young law school established in his name at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Among students of diplomatic history, he is recognized primarily as the author of the *Clark Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine*, which presaged the renunciation of U.S. military intervention in Latin America during the 1930's. By Utahns, and Mormons generally, he is well remembered as a towering figure in the Church—counselor to three Church presidents from 1933 until his death in 1961. Many yet living were once moved by his powerful sermons, inspired and enlightened by his New Testament scholarship, and stimulated (or provoked) by his strong, oft-expressed views on political and social questions. To members of the Mormon Church his most important work occurred after 1933. To the country at large, however, his most significant legacy may be the nearly three decades of distinguished public service rendered prior to accepting the call of his church.

This biography of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., focuses on the public years outside Utah—from his matriculation as a thirty-two-year-old law student at Columbia University in 1903 to his resignation as United States Ambassador to Mexico in 1933. The book, some 600 pages plus bibliography and footnotes, is the first part of an official biography authorized by the Clark family and trustees of the Clark estate. A second volume authored by D. Michael Quinn, covering President Clark's service as a general authority of the Church, is scheduled for publication in early 1982. The biographical set will be completed with three

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\* Professor of Law, J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University. B.A., M.A., 1952, University of Arizona; Ph.D., 1955, University of Illinois; LL.B., 1963, University of Arizona.

volumes of papers, to be selected and edited by David H. Yarn, Jr., the general editor of the series.

Writing an officially sanctioned biography offers manifest advantages. Most obvious in this case is full access to the voluminous Clarkana Papers of Joshua Reuben Clark, Jr., deposited in the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University. Numbering 140,000 individual items, the Clark Papers are a rich, heretofore-untapped source of information on the public and private life of President Clark as well as on historical events of the period. Access to the Papers has been highly restricted, with full access thus far granted only to those associated with the present biographical project. The Clark Papers will not be readily available to others until some time after publication of this five-volume set. Official sanction of the biography also assured the generous cooperation of family and friends of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., whose records and recollections provided important collateral sources of information.

But writing under official sanction entails constraints as well as advantages. The family, the trustees, and close associates of J. Reuben Clark necessarily had a deep interest in the substance of the narrative. The author could not write without consciously anticipating their reactions, nor could he publish without their approval. Although their primary concern was to have a competent, scholarly, gracefully written chronicle of the life of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., their views of what was accurate and appropriate had to be taken into account. Judging by the final product, these constraints may have induced the author to leave a few conclusions unstated, or obscurely stated, but otherwise were not unduly confining. If the book does not maintain as sharp and critical a focus as less admiring biographers might choose to adopt, it nevertheless retains a basic integrity—honestly, if always sympathetically, describing and interpreting the events of J. Reuben Clark's life.

The style and format of the book suggest an attempt to reach both a popular and a scholarly audience. For the scholar, the work is heavily footnoted to relevant secondary materials as well as to the Clarkana Papers and other primary sources. A very useful index and a twenty-two page bibliographic essay increase the value of the work to students. All of these accoutrements of academia attest that the subject was carefully researched. The style, on the other hand, is pitched to the popular taste and is eminently readable. Academic jargon is almost

totally absent. Missing also are the cautious language and the sober, measured analysis of the scholar that sometimes give a work depth and solidity. The author's decision to adopt a style as much akin to the novelist as to the historian appears to be a conscious choice made in light of the biographical subject matter and the intended audience.

To capture the popular reader's interest, word pictures, drawn in intimate detail, are used to make events and characters almost come alive. Not content with vivifying overt behavior, the author often reaches into the thoughts and deep emotions of his subject. Thus, for example, we find that "the moment of supreme triumph" in J. Reuben Clark's career was a touching, personal episode traceable to "an early evening at the embassy in the twilight of autumn" when the "Clarks were preparing to entertain."

Reuben, resplendent in his Prince Albert, had paused in the *sala* to fumble with an errant cufflink when he looked through the vaulted archway to see what he described as an apparition. It was Luacine Savage Clark, standing in a floor-length blue gown, arranging some calla lilies on the piano—easily at that moment the most beautiful woman on earth.

This, Reuben told himself, was it. For this he had slaved and sacrificed his entire life . . . .

Reuben thought of a song, one of his favorites, by Jessie Evans Smith. He listened to Verdi and Wagner any night of the year, but in the few sentimental moments of his life he liked Jessie Evans Smith . . . . Tears filled the ambassador's eyes. But this was no way to behave. Tough and cynical Puig Casauranc would be walking through that door any moment, a cigar clamped in his teeth, and it would not do for him to see the U.S. ambassador wiping tears.

The moment passed quickly and Reuben hurried to receive his guests. But he never forgot it. . . . It was the point in life when J. Reuben Clark knew he had found success.<sup>1</sup>

The picture spread before the mind's eye is appealing, even moving if one is a bit sentimental. This passage may bear a heavier load of affective imagery than might be found in four paragraphs selected at random, but it fairly illustrates the lyrical quality of the prose that pervades the entire book.

The prose style has one unfortunate side effect, however, in giving the interpretation of biographical events a storybook,

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1. F. FOX, *J. REUBEN CLARK: THE PUBLIC YEARS 583-84* (1980).

even fictional, quality that might detract from credibility. A critical reader can scarcely help asking how the biographer knew all this in such intimate detail. The passage just quoted must have been based on something J. Reuben Clark wrote or said. But when, or where? Seventy-four footnotes grace this chapter—but not one comes to the rescue here. A careful reading of the bibliographical essay suggests that the material must have come from interviews with Clark family members, and perhaps more copious footnoting would have been pedantic. But the shadow which style casts upon credibility remains. This is unfortunate because it tends to obscure the author's genuine scholarship and painstaking review and comparison of sources.

The treatment of historical events adopts much the same style as the more personal episodes, with intimately detailed, highly personalized word pictures: "grimy, sweat-stained, travel-worn, unshaven" Mexican *insurrectos*, "laughing, singing, cleaving the air with ear-splitting *vivas*, and happily shooting at anything that moved . . . ." The result is entertaining and provides adequate background to understand what J. Reuben Clark is doing, but not always enough to place the events themselves in broad historical context. Indeed, episodes in the narrative frequently appear as vignettes, detailed at the center but fading off into a haze at the edges, lacking sharply defined connections with other events.

Even so, historians who know the context will find many enlightening details in this volume. The Clarkana Papers contain private letters and memoranda dealing with nearly every aspect of Reuben Clark's public career, from life in the solicitor's office under James Brown Scott to the Chamizal boundary negotiations between the United States and Mexico in 1933. At the very least, this new source should provide additional illuminating footnotes to the history of the period.

The book unquestionably deserves to be taken seriously as biography. In six hundred pages it provides an informed basis for appraising the character and contributions of its subject against the background of the times in which he lived. The author makes judgments, but he also invites the reader to make them. As I perused the pages of the book, I found myself continually appraising J. Reuben Clark the public servant, the diplomat, the lawyer, the family man, the church man, the man. For

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2. *Id.* at 131.

me, the book had one further quality of good biography: it evoked serious personal introspection. As I looked into the life of J. Reuben Clark, I also gained perspective on my own.

The book departs somewhat from strict chronological coverage of the subject. The reader who wishes to place J. Reuben Clark's activities and accomplishments in an orderly time sequence may thus encounter some difficulty. As Fox acknowledges, this is not a conventional biography that discusses events in chronological order. Rather it treats the thirty-year period within five themes: (1) Education and apprenticeship, covering the period 1903-10; (2) the lawyer as policymaker, dealing with the years as Solicitor of the State Department; (3) the lawyer as crusader, encompassing the development of his ideas on the role of law, diplomacy, and judicial institutions in world affairs, and his opposition to the League of Nations and the World Court; (4) the lawyer as private citizen, including his private law practice, family life, church relationships, and, paradoxically, his unsuccessful ventures into senatorial politics; and, finally (5) the lawyer as diplomat, 1926-33. The five themes follow only a rough chronological arrangement, and even within major subdivisions the strict temporal ordering of events does not always have high priority.

The narrative does not linger on President Clark's early life. A scant seventeen pages cover the period from his birth in September 1871 to age thirty-two when he began his formal legal education at Columbia University in 1903.<sup>3</sup> He was born in the rural Mormon community of Grantsville, Utah, son of Joshua Sr. and Mary Louisa Woolley Clark. His father was a farmer and school teacher, a convert to the Latter-day Saint faith of some four years at the time of young Reuben's birth. His mother was born to a Mormon pioneer family during its trek westward to the Salt Lake valley in 1848. In a setting just a little removed from the frontier, young Reuben's life revolved around work, religion, and learning. In Grantsville the opportunities for learning were limited, and he repeated the eighth grade twice because no advanced schooling was available. At age nineteen he enrolled for a term at the LDS college in Salt Lake City and later received his B.S. degree with honors from the University of Utah,

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3. This period is covered in more detail in D. YARN, *YOUNG REUBEN: THE EARLY LIFE OF J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.* (1973). One other published volume of biographical significance is J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.: *DIPLOMAT AND STATESMAN* (R. Hillam ed. 1973).

supporting himself with full-time work as an assistant to University President James E. Talmage. In September, following his graduation, he was married to Luacine Savage of Salt Lake City and took a position as a school teacher in Heber City, Utah.

For the next five years J. Reuben Clark, Jr., struggled to find direction for his abilities and aspirations. The schoolteaching experience at Heber was not satisfying and lasted only a year. He taught the following year at the Salt Lake City Business College, then signed a contract as principal of the state normal school in Cedar City. This also proved to be a one-year stand. His contract was not renewed, and he returned to the business college. In 1902 he unsuccessfully sought an appointment as private secretary to Utah's Senator Reed Smoot. Despite these career disappointments, a new direction in his life was beginning to emerge. He had developed a taste for the law through study in spare hours, and he began to cast about for ways to finance a law school education in the East. The hope became a reality in the summer of 1903 when Joseph Nelson, his close friend and proprietor of the business college, offered to underwrite his study at the Columbia University Law School.

The pilgrimage eastward to New York City was a major turning point in Reuben Clark's life. For the next thirty years he would be only an occasional resident of his native Utah. The farm boy school teacher was to become an international lawyer, public servant, and diplomat. At Columbia University his intellect and industry earned the respect of colleagues and professors and won him a coveted spot on the *Columbia Law Review*. Upon graduation he was immediately appointed to responsible public office—Assistant Solicitor of the State Department—at the behest of James Brown Scott, one of his Columbia Law School mentors, who had recently been made solicitor. During the next four years, Reuben Clark virtually ran the legal operations of the State Department and, in 1910, was himself appointed solicitor. He left the solicitor's office in 1913 with the outgoing Taft administration but stayed in part-time government service for another year as General Counsel to the American-British Claims Commission.

In the solicitor's office he proved to be a competent administrator and a painstakingly thorough, effective government lawyer. As assistant solicitor his most notable exploit was preparation of the United States' case against Chile in support of the so-called "Alsop Claim." The case involved the claim of several



U.S. citizens to the proceeds of two silver mines and a customs house pledged by Bolivia for the repayment of debts owed to U.S. interests but located in territory subsequently seized by Chile in the 1879 War of the Pacific. The assistant solicitor's carefully researched report on the claim in 1907 transformed what had been essentially a political dispute into a tenable legal claim. He continued to superintend legal work on the case until it was settled through arbitration in 1911. The amount of the award was \$906,000—one third of the sum claimed but far more than anyone expected to recover and large by almost any contemporary arbitral standards.

Other assignments during that apprenticeship period also contributed to his growing familiarity with Latin American affairs. These included numerous memoranda propounding legal justifications for U.S. economic and military interventions in the Caribbean area, the policy outcome of Teddy Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and Taft's dollar diplomacy. During the solicitor years, his attention was increasingly drawn to Mexican relations. The onset of protracted revolution, with persistent, chronic threats to American lives and property in Mexico, created constant demands upon the United States government to "do something." In this setting Reuben Clark's signal contribution was to provide legal justification and policy support for the Taft posture of nonintervention—a marked contrast to the interventionism of U.S. policy in other parts of the Caribbean, as well as to the Mexican policy of the succeeding Wilson administration.

As General Counsel to the American-British Claims Commission, he again demonstrated his competence in international claims litigation. His tenure was cut short, however, by successful efforts of the Wilson administration to find jobs for deserving Democrats. He had been able to work more cooperatively with his British counterparts in the claims litigation than with some of his politically partisan compatriots in the State Department and the Congress.

Upon leaving the solicitor's office he opened a private practice in international law, with offices in Washington, D.C., and later in New York City. He was able to draw business from his government connections and gradually developed a respectable clientele, including the Japanese Embassy, the Cuban Legation, and a number of business firms engaged in international transactions. He also attracted a good deal of legal work unrelated to

international law, often in the service of impecunious clients. Even when dealing with clients who should have been able to pay, he was better at handling the legal work than collecting the fees. Still, he managed to develop a financially comfortable practice, while always looking for the elusive "big case" that could mean financial independence. His prospects took a decided turn for the better in 1916 when he became counsel to the newly organized American International Corporation (AIC), one of the early American-based multinational conglomerates, with a capitalization of \$50 million. He opened his New York office to cultivate this new relationship, and the outlook was decidedly optimistic.

But great wealth was not in his future. The United States entered the war with Germany, and public service once more beckoned through an appeal to his patriotic sense of duty. At great financial sacrifice, he left his private practice to serve as an Army major in the headquarters of the Army's Provost Marshall and as special assistant to the United States Attorney General. There he found himself more directly in conflict with the Wilson administration than with the Kaiser. Never fond of Democrats, and vehemently opposed to the concentration of governmental authority in the executive, he devoted much of his personal wartime service in the Justice Department to opposing the expansion of Presidential war powers at the expense of private rights. His largely unheeded advice dealt with such matters as arbitrary criminal proceedings against enemy aliens and others suspected of pro-German leanings, seizure of enemy alien property, nationalization of railroads, and a multitude of lesser economic regulations.

After the war he tried to pick up the pieces of his eastern practice, but without success. His principal remaining client, AIC, fell on economic hard times. With affairs in the East going sour, he returned to Utah in 1921 and assumed active partnership in the firm of Clark and Richards, with which he had been nominally affiliated since 1913. For two years he still commuted to the East as part-time counsel to AIC, but that came to an end when he was discharged as a result of persisting disagreements with less-than-scrupulous corporate management. Thereafter, he devoted greater energies to the Salt Lake City law practice.

Even during the economically trying postwar years, the lawyer could not resist the call of public affairs. He was heavily involved in the fight by Republican "irreconcilables" to defeat

United States membership in the League of Nations. Other opponents of the League—such as Lodge, Borah, Reed, Brandegee, LaFollette, and Knox—were more in the public eye; but none worked more fervently, nor rejoiced more sincerely in the outcome, than J. Reuben Clark. He also was actively opposed to United States membership in the World Court. With the election of Republican President Harding in 1920, Clark's legal talent, experience, judgment, and administrative skills were once more in official demand, and he was enticed from private practice to assist with the 1921-22 Washington Conference on Naval Disarmament. Never lacking energy and ambition for public service, he unsuccessfully sought the Utah Republican nomination to the United States Senate in 1922.

Severance of the eastern corporate connection in 1923 left Reuben Clark to focus, for the first time, on his Salt Lake City practice. But this also proved to be only an interlude. A new round of governmental service began, innocently enough, almost as an incident to his law practice. In 1924, as the price of recognizing the Mexican Government then in power, the United States had obtained a treaty creating the United States-Mexico Mixed Claims Commission. Nominally established to adjudicate claims against both governments, the Commission necessarily devoted most of its time to claims arising from destruction and confiscation of American property, as well as injury and loss of life, incident to the ongoing Mexican revolution. United States claims against Mexico totalled a staggering \$935 million, and among them were a number of Mormon claims represented by the firm of Clark and Richards. Unfortunately, the Commission had been plagued by long delays and by 1926 was floundering badly. Looking for some way to salvage the operation, the State Department turned to J. Reuben Clark as one of the few Republicans in the country having the requisite experience with international claims, knowledge of Mexican affairs, and willingness to work for government wages. He was asked to accept a temporary assignment as agent in charge of the American agency of the Commission. If he could get the Commission moving again, it might improve the chances for recovery on the Mormon claims as well as other legitimate claims by Mexican and U.S. nationals against one another's governments. He accepted.

The appointment as agent was in fact only temporary: within a few months he was able to exchange the role of agent for that of general counsel to the agency, which would permit

him to spend more time in Utah. But that expectation was illusory. He was persuaded to serve as Acting Under Secretary of State during August and September of 1927, another tribute to his Mexican expertise and administrative experience in the State Department; and in October he became legal advisor to Dwight Morrow, the new United States Ambassador to Mexico. In the spring of 1928, he was invited to become Under Secretary in his own right for the remaining months of the Coolidge administration. He agreed on the understanding that he would serve only if defeated in a second bid for the Utah Republican senatorial nomination. He lost—and took up his new official duties in August. President Hoover accepted his resignation the following June, but this brought no interruption in public service. His skill with Mexican affairs had apparently become indispensable, and he was quickly sent to rejoin Morrow in Mexico. When Morrow resigned the following year to accept the Republican senatorial nomination from New Jersey, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., was the obvious choice as his successor. Ambassador Clark served with competence during a period of relative diplomatic calm and did much to place United States-Mexican relations on a basis of mutual confidence and respect. He resigned in February 1933 as part of the transition to the new administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Summarizing the accomplishments of J. Reuben Clark during the years as diplomat, 1926-33, is difficult because he labored with matters that seemingly required constant negotiation and adjustment rather than lending themselves to neat closure. The work of the Mixed Claims Commission never achieved more than modest results before it was disbanded, and unsatisfied claims persisted as the central irritant in United States-Mexican diplomatic relations. Although a number of individual claims were resolved, the major clash of interests was essentially irreconcilable. During the relatively prosperous but autocratic rule of Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911), oil and gas rights and substantial tracts of agricultural lands were granted to foreign interests. In the revolutionary post-Diaz wave of nationalism, Mexican leaders—with overwhelming support from their people—determined to regain control of the alienated national resources. As counsel to the Claims Commission, counsel to Morrow, Under Secretary, and Ambassador, Reuben Clark was never free of the claims problem. At least in part because of his efforts, a number of the claims were settled satisfactorily. Some of the disputed oil con-

cessions were retained for American oil companies, and progress was made in obtaining compensation for expropriated lands.

Perhaps his ultimate accomplishment was a style and an attitude, particularly cultivated during his term as Ambassador, that moved United States-Mexican relations toward a plane of equality and mutual respect. From his experience in Mexico, he developed deep affection for the Mexican people and sympathy for the aims of the Mexican revolution—more sympathy, indeed, than could frequently be mustered for the methods and aims of the American oil companies. He had a strong personal aversion to American interventionism in Latin America, a legacy of the solicitor years that had been heightened by subsequent events. His noninterventionist stance was publicized most widely in the *Clark Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine*, a 238-page document prepared in 1928 during his brief stint as Under Secretary of State. In no uncertain terms, the *Memorandum* argued from historical evidence that the Monroe Doctrine could not be used to justify United States intervention in Latin American countries. The *Memorandum* was never adopted as an official policy statement, but it foreshadowed a new emphasis on nonintervention by the Hoover administration and the subsequent “good neighbor” policy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. When privately published, it was well received in Mexico and other Latin American countries. During his twenty-eight months as Ambassador, his own low-profile embodiment of the good neighbor philosophy helped bring an unusual interlude of peace and good will to relations of the two countries.

During his last year in Mexico, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., had been aware that the Mormon Church had plans for him upon his retirement as Ambassador. In April 1933 at age 61, he was installed as a counselor to Heber J. Grant, president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Three decades earlier he had turned his face to the East and a distinguished career in law and public service. Now he was embarking on a new career, almost equal in length, of service to fellow men.

His involvement in public affairs did not terminate at that point, although never again did it absorb his full time and energies for any long period. At the request of President Roosevelt, he served as a delegate to the Seventh International Conference of American States, held in Montevideo in 1933. From 1934 until the outbreak of the Second World War, he was an active member of the quasi-official Foreign Bondholder's Protective

Council, engaged in largely fruitless efforts to salvage two billion dollars' worth of defunct foreign government bonds held by Americans. He also was appointed to the Inter-American Committee of Experts on the Codification of International Law (1936) and the Phi Delta Phi Commission of Experts on the Codification of International Law (1945-1950).

What conclusions may be drawn about J. Reuben Clark, Jr., the public servant and diplomat? Even without taking into account the long road from Grantsville to Mexico City, the public career was distinguished. What he achieved, he did on his own, without the benefit of personal fortune or family connection. Each appointment, of course, depended on personal connections with those wielding influence, and his connections were mostly with Republican administrations. But responsibilities came because of his recognized abilities, not his political influence. He was hired out of law school to a responsible State Department position because of past acquaintance with James Brown Scott; but Scott hired his former student for reasons totally related to Reuben Clark's abilities. The same was true of every subsequent appointment. He was sought for government service because of his recognized intelligence, good judgment, integrity, administrative skills, knowledge of Mexican affairs, and willingness to work hard for relatively low government pay. Given the necessary level of competence, the last qualification may have been the most crucial. Only during the two years as legal counsel to Ambassador Morrow did Reuben Clark's government service yield substantial financial rewards—and that because Morrow paid the tab out of his own pocket. Ironically, every dollar hoarded from the Morrow years was spent to meet official entertainment expenses during the Clark years as Ambassador.

As an international lawyer, J. Reuben Clark's primary accomplishments occurred in the field of public law during his service with the government, a subject already noted above. Besides his practical labors as lawyer and advocate, he contributed to the development of the law through a multitude of carefully-drawn briefs, memoranda, and other government documents. He also wrote at least three articles on international legal subjects for respected professional journals, all relating to aspects of his work as a government lawyer.<sup>4</sup> His *Clark Memorandum* stands

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4. Clark, *Legal Aspects Regarding the Ownership and Distribution of Awards*, 7 AM. J. INT'L L. 382 (1913); Clark, *Jurisdiction of the American-British Claims Commis-*

as an enduring, if unofficial, landmark in the evolution of United States policy toward Latin America. As a private practitioner, his achievements fell considerably short of his aspirations. Prospects for a thriving international law practice in the East were cut short by the World War and never re-emerged. Although the Utah practice was respected and reasonably remunerative, and included a number of international legal matters, he never stayed with it long enough to reach commanding heights as a practicing lawyer.

Even while he practiced law, his heart seemed to be in matters of larger public concern. As a fledgling international lawyer fresh out of Columbia Law School, he joined the newly established American Society for International Law and for a time shared the hopes of its founders that international peace might be achieved through world institutions for judicial settlement. As he gained practical experience with existing settlement procedures, however, he became convinced that grandiose schemes for peace through judicial settlement were inconsistent with the inchoate state of international law, the vast disparities in national cultures and legal systems, and the unwillingness of states to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of an international court. He began to harbor doubts that any system of human law imposed upon such diversity could ever constrain man's "inborn nature to contend."<sup>5</sup> Still more important, he came increasingly to believe that the mission of the United States as an example, as a moral leader to the world, depended upon remaining completely free and independent from the legal strictures implicit in the plans for judicial settlement. His new philosophical leanings were reinforced by the World War, which seemed to him a clear warning against entanglements with the Old World.

Thus, when the fight over U.S. membership in the League of Nations erupted in all its fury, Reuben Clark—only recently mustered out of the service and struggling to rebuild his private practice—threw himself into the midst of it. Undoubtedly he was moved by political motives as well as philosophical conviction. He had lost his part-time position with the American British Claims Commission through partisan action of the Wilson administration. He had devoted much of his wartime military

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*sion*, 7 AM. J. INT'L L. 687 (1913); Clark, *The Oil Settlement with Mexico*, 6 FOREIGN AFF. 600 (1928).

5. F. Fox, *supra* note 1, at 232.

service to combatting the accretion of wartime domestic powers to the President. And now Wilson the Democrat, the autocrat, was attempting to foist upon the country a new and permanent entangling alliance with the decadent nations of Europe. The philosophical commitment, however, clearly ran deeper than the partisan motivations or the antipathy to Woodrow Wilson. Long after Wilson had passed from the scene, Reuben Clark maintained his opposition to U.S. membership in the League and the World Court associated with it. A generation later, when Democrats and Republicans alike stood convinced of the need for world international organization, Reuben Clark still held firm and remained among the few irreconcilables opposed to United States membership in the United Nations.

The biography tells us much about J. Reuben Clark the public figure; it also tells us something about the man. That he was a good man we can have no doubt—whether judged by the standards of contemporary society or by more exacting Christian precepts. He was the very embodiment of the Protestant ethic—honesty, sobriety, thrift, and hard work. He was a man of good will, a loyal friend, a caring—if often absent—husband and father. He adhered strictly to his church's teachings on total abstinence from tobacco and alcoholic beverages, although he was willing to provide them to his guests. Moving to the East at a time when "Mormon" was still virtually synonymous with "polygamy," he chose to identify himself with the faith rather than changing his colors to blend into the eastern, non-Mormon milieu. When the call came at age 61 to devote the rest of his life to demanding responsibilities in his church, he willingly, wholeheartedly accepted.

Yet his life deviated in significant ways from the model now held out to persons of his faith. In the current Mormon model the traditional Christian virtues are of course assumed. But the model embraces other patterns of behavior to which members are expected to conform. Among these are frequent meeting attendance, strict observance of the Sabbath, diligent service as teacher or officer in church organizations, regular payment of tithes and offerings, a comfortable acceptance of all church doctrines, respect for church leaders, and diligent attention to family responsibilities. At one time or another during those public years, J. Reuben Clark departed in some degree from each of these canons.

The biography sends out conflicting signals concerning his



performance as husband and father. On the one hand, he was devoted to his wife, Luacine, and a concerned, active father to his children, providing a full share of paternal leadership, discipline, and love. The Clarks thus enjoyed "a remarkably strong home"<sup>6</sup> and a family life of "harmony and bliss."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Reuben Clark was often away from his family. Driven by an unquenchable determination to make his mark in law and public service, he worked days, evenings, and weekends, often including Sundays. His family returned to Utah each summer, but he remained in the East. When Utah became home base in 1920, he still spent much of his time commuting to the East. A photograph of Luacine and the children, taken about 1920, bears the revealing caption, "No mere happenstance that daddy was missing from the picture."<sup>8</sup> J. Reuben Clark may indeed have scored passable marks as a husband and father, but the circumstances created by his long working hours and frequent absences were far from ideal. Given his firm will and strength of character, one has no reason to doubt that he provided leadership and discipline to the family. Yet much of it necessarily occurred via mail and telephone during their long and frequent separations.

The narrative depicts change and growth over the years. The first years in the East were truly not happy ones for Luacine Clark. Her health was poor, she was overworked, the family was burdened with debts incurred to finance Reuben's legal education, and she longed to return to her native Utah. But her husband saw career and fortune in the East. If the marriage was to prosper, one of them had to let go of his dream—and it was Luacine who made the sacrifice that held the family together. The biographer describes her travail in this poignant passage:

Although neither of them realized it, Luacine and her husband were approaching disaster. True, they loved one another and wanted the very best for their marriage. But life had placed them in a difficult situation: if they were to survive, either the one or the other must essentially give up everything. Reuben, though he talked of it, was not ready to make such a surrender; Luacine must make it or it would not be made. Beneath her frailties she was a strong woman and preternaturally wise. She sensed that a moment of truth had arrived. She also sensed

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6. *Id.* at 379.

7. *Id.* at 383.

8. *Id.* at 386.

that her husband, if pressed to the ultimate decision, would make it for her rather than for his profession—but that the decision itself might destroy him. He had always said that he wanted to return home and settle down with his own people, and someday—though not now—he just might do it. Luacine decided to give him rein and trust to the future.<sup>9</sup>

Once the commitment was made, things did get better. Luacine Clark began to look for and find the positive aspects of life in the East. Reuben began to do more of his work at home, less at the office. Over the years there were indeed moments of bliss, and the family ties proved strong and enduring. But that strength was founded on the sacrifice and resilience of Luacine Clark.

One may argue, with some justification, that J. Reuben Clark's performance of his family role was not highly untypical. Although not necessarily the ideal, allotting the principal burdens of childrearing and household management to the wife and mother, and subordinating her desires to the career interests of her husband are not uncommon. Indeed, as recently as the turn of the century, the Mormon Church itself was not averse to calling husbands and fathers on full-time missions of two years or more, leaving wives and children to manage the farm or business and even help support the absent missionary. Perhaps, then, his family role behavior was not so far from the norm of his time, even if somewhat removed from the ideal posited by the current model.

In some other respects, however, his lack of congruence with the orthodox Mormon model was clearer and sharper. As a boy he had experienced a close and conforming relationship to his church. As a man he chose to maintain his Mormon identity when convenience might have dictated otherwise. The central values of the faith determined many aspects of his conduct. And yet during much of his life he was not the typical devout Mormon, measured either by the current Mormon model or by the somewhat differing behavioral standards of the early 20th century. In that earlier period the principles were the same, but meetings were fewer, doctrinal differences among the faithful were more common, and most Mormons were farmers who had to milk their cows on Sunday as on other days. Judged even by this standard, Reuben Clark departed from the norm. During

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9. *Id.* at 374.

much of his public life, he did not regularly attend Latter-day Saint Sunday services, even when they were available. For a time the Clark children were sent to Protestant Sunday schools in the nation's Capital. Often his heavy work schedule interfered with Sunday meeting attendance. He avoided meetings intentionally when they were held in the Washington, D.C., home of Reed Smoot, United States Senator and Mormon apostle. Senator Smoot had unceremoniously dismissed Clark's 1902 application for a position in the Senator's office, and the two Utah public figures never developed a close, warm relationship. Under the burden of law school debts, Reuben also fell behind in tithe payment and, despite Luacine's urgings, "became ever less concerned about catching up."<sup>10</sup> During most of the sojourn in the East, again to the dismay of his wife, he held no regular position as an officer or teacher in the church organization. At the time of his call to be a counselor to the president of the Church, he was distinguished from other general authorities by never having held any responsible administrative position in the Church.

For much of his public life, J. Reuben Clark was a doctrinal skeptic. The evolution from "the Grantsville boy of unalloyed faith into a far more complex, rational, and questioning individual" occurred during his years in Salt Lake City in pursuit of higher education.<sup>11</sup> The rational person, he came to believe, must subject all doctrine, preachments and even the scriptures to the "ordeal of pitiless reason." What a person "can himself reason out according to his standards," he once wrote, "he accepts unqualifiedly; whatever cannot stand his tests, he rejects as unfit."<sup>12</sup>

During the years of midpassage, the skepticism began to mellow, and his return to Utah in the 1920's brought renewed church activity. In 1925 he was appointed to the general board of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and the following year became a member of the editorial committee of the *Improvement Era*. But the real key to his reconversion was the Sunday school class he began teaching in the Salt Lake City Twentieth Ward. The subject of the class was the life of Christ. At first unenthusiastic about the assignment, he soon caught fire with his subject and began to devote to it the long hours and

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10. *Id.* at 433.

11. *Id.* at 430.

12. *Id.* at 431.

careful preparation typically bestowed upon his professional endeavors. His research became the starting point of a book published two decades later, *Our Lord of the Gospels*. More profoundly, his study of the Savior's life brought him face to face with religion's most meaningful questions—the purpose of life and the ultimate meaning of redemption. Reuben Clark emerged from the experience with a new appreciation of things spiritual. The self-assured questioning of earlier years dissolved in a newfound humility that was willing to leave much more to faith. The following passage from the biography shows his own subsequent acknowledgment of the change:

To his brother, Frank . . . he wrote, "My experience and observations tell me that as we grow older, we lose much, indeed most of our cocksureness, indeed a certainty about many matters, which in our youth seem beyond question." To a college friend he explained that he had passed the time of his "higher criticism" and that, as he reflected back upon it, it reminded him of a story about Abraham Lincoln. While visiting with Grant before Appomattox, Lincoln was discovered by one of the general's staff sitting in the shade of his tent and reading the Bible. "What! Abe Lincoln reading the Bible?" exclaimed the officer. "Yes," the president replied, "I have learned to read the Bible. I believe all I can and take the rest on faith." Then Reuben wrote: "Substituting in substance the words 'our Mormon Scriptures,' you will have about my situation. I believe it all. I believe our whole scripture. Much of it I am not able to understand, but I take it on faith, because I am sure it is a living faith."<sup>13</sup>

The unquestioning faith of childhood, once lost, was not restored. Instead, it was replaced by a mature faith that reached beyond the questioning to a new level of acceptance and conviction.

Never dull, the book tells a story of wide appeal: through ability, determination, and hard work, the small town boy makes good. It is not so much a Mormon success story as an American success story. It is Horatio Alger, with a difference. Reuben Clark began poor enough, and he became comfortably well off, but he stopped short of acquiring the riches that generally rewarded Alger's protagonists. Some might ascribe this to bad luck, but in retrospect the reason is clear: he gave causes and

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13. *Id.* at 445-46 (footnotes omitted).

principles higher priority than the sheer acquisition of wealth. Every achievement exacts a price, and the single-minded pursuit of wealth entailed costs that he was unwilling to pay. His public years teach other lessons in costs. He achieved distinction in his public career and with it came the sincere respect of colleagues and acquaintances. But this was achieved only at the price of tireless effort and unremitting attention to detail. The fourteen-hour day may have appeared legendary to others, but with him it was an ordinary fact of life. The cost also had to be counted in time away from his family, as well as the burdens assumed by Luacine Clark to make the arrangement work. Long periods of semi-inactivity in the Church were another part of the price exacted by the demands of public service and professional excellence.

The story has a happy ending. He enjoyed a satisfying career; his family turned out well; he returned to the fold of Zion as an honored leader, a pillar of strength and rectitude among the Saints. In one sense his life is an object lesson in the rewards of Christian virtue. It is also a study in the consequences of human choice. No one can do every good thing. Time and attention are limited resources. Time devoted to one pursuit cannot simultaneously be devoted to another. Viewed on a broad canvas, the choices made by J. Reuben Clark in public and private life led to success and personal fulfillment. Inexorably, however, the choice to do some good things implied a choice not to do others. Not everyone would care to make the same choices. Some would shrink from the hard work. Others might hesitate to give up precious family associations or to require such sacrifice from family members. Still others would be unwilling to leave so little room for church activity and association for so long a period of time. With benefit of hindsight, J. Reuben Clark might have done some things differently. But who would care to fault him for the choices he made? In such matters each must answer for himself and not for another. In his case the outcome suggests that good choices must have been made along the way.