

ONE MAN'S UTAH

Kenneth W. Godfrey

History of Utah. By Wayne Stout. Salt Lake City, Utah: Wayne Stout, 1967. 553 pp., \$10.00. Kenneth Godfrey, coordinator of the Arizona-New Mexico Division of L.D.S. Institutes and Seminaries, wrote his doctoral dissertation at Brigham Young University on Mormon Church history.

The writing of history is fraught with difficulties because the historian has no direct access to the past. Through newspapers, diaries, journals, and public documents prior events may be glimpsed as shadows, but even then it is as though one saw through a glass darkly. Writing a history of Utah is in some respects uniquely difficult. The documents upon which that history must be based are overflowing with biases, ulterior motives, and inferior perceptions. Territorial officials in their reports of the "Utah situation" frequently either deliberately misinterpreted events in the Great Basin or misjudged its people. And the Mormons who recorded their feelings and reactions to these same events often misjudged the intent and motives of federal officials.

Wayne Stout's book could hardly be ranked by any valid criteria as one of the better works covering events in Utah between 1870 and 1896. In this preface Stout accuses many historians of submitting "to a strict code that only facts should be recorded" (p. 1). Personal opinions were not to be expressed or elaboration or meaning attached to the facts. Contrary to such a view, Stout boldly proclaims, "The author refuses to be shackled by these restrictions . . . accordingly this history will be an editorialized commentary on the issues and events which vexed the people of Utah during this period" (p. 1). Every knowledgeable historian knows that history is not written in a vacuum, free from bias. The very "facts" that are gathered reflect the predilections of the author. Stout is preaching nothing new. But what he believes to be a new point of view causes him to overlook evidence that would nullify some of his conclusions. Had he "editorialized" after or even while he presented all of the evidence, he could perhaps be forgiven, or even applauded.

But his book reflects a less than thorough search for all the available facts. Furthermore, some of his statements are so exaggerated they hardly deserve serious attention. For example, how can a reviewer comment on such remarks as the one which appears in the preface charging that the "infamy of the segregation rulings reduced the federal judges to the level of barbarians, who like Judge Jeffreys, loved to be cruel"? Or this one: "The passage of the law [Edmunds-Tucker] stunned the people of Utah. The vicious act reduced Utah to the status of a Spain in the 13th century, with all the cruelties of the Spanish inquisition."

The reader is struck by the tone of crisis that almost shouts from the book's pages. Somehow Stout has made every day in Utah a day filled with anxiety. If Stout's book is to be believed, fleeing from snooping, malicious federal agents, attempting to thwart a federal conspiracy, standing firm for conscience's sake against the tyranny of United States law, and waging vigorous political campaigns were the daily diet of most Mormons. He says nothing about the drudgery of wresting a living from a reluctant soil in the