

wide distribution of the priesthood among its members; the wide participation of its membership in church activities; the place of women in the church; its missionary, tithing, marriage, and welfare systems; its interpretation of the Word of Wisdom; its auxiliaries; the stress on family religious teachings; and the devotion of its members to support the church, Holm sees more of a survival of the organizational dynamic of Joseph Smith's restoration than he finds in his own church.

THE LION OF THE LORD

Donald R. Moorman

The Lion of the Lord, a Biography of Brigham Young. By Stanley P. Hirshson. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1969. xx, 396 pp. \$8.95.

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In the history of the West, Brigham Young is a star of the first magnitude, for no man shaped the history of the Great Basin more dramatically nor influenced the ultimate destiny of the Mormons more profoundly than did this extraordinary figure of nineteenth century America. Yet the personality of this remarkable colonizer has excited feelings of ambivalence unresolved to this day. Professor Hirshson's latest work continues the tradition: though widely revered and commemorated, Young's life remains an enigma to serious scholars striving to capture both the deeds and the spirit of the man in biography. The sources exploited by Professor Hirshson and his interpretation of them testify that *The Lion of the Lord** has failed to reach the flesh-and-blood Brigham Young, leaving us rather with a caricature of the man drawn from news accounts of the period; the founder of a new western empire is transformed into a paper lion.

Professor Hirshson dismisses his failure to utilize available materials with the simple explanation that he received no help or encouragement from the Church Historian's Office and that discussions with Mormon scholars convinced him that few records of historic importance were to be found in these archives. The key to understanding Brigham Young, he explains, was "not in the Rocky Mountains but in the Midwest and along the Atlantic Coast. . . ." This is pure folly. A brief perusal of the index of original holdings in the Latter-day Saints' Archives should serve to convince any historian that more than one lifetime would be necessary for a serious student to work through the personal papers of significant Mormon leaders. Letters, reports, and memoranda of George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball, and John Taylor alone are voluminous. The private and public correspondence of Brigham Young is no less impressive: "History of Brigham Young" (manuscript history), forty-seven volumes; letter-books, fifteen volumes or fifteen thousand entries; public, private, and family papers, nineteen thousand items;

*This book is reviewed concerning its use of sources by Chad Flake elsewhere in this issue (pp. 105-107).

telegram books, four volumes, and five hundred unbound dispatches; three diaries relating to his pre-Utah period; presidential office journal 1850-1857, five volumes; first presidency papers related to Brigham Young, one thousand documents. Numerous non-Mormon students of Utah history, including myself, having become familiar figures in the Church Archives, have been accorded full cooperation in the use of these materials.

On the credit side of the research ledger, Professor Hirshson has exploited for the first time a rich finding of New York newspapers, apparently collected by the New Jersey Historical Society, and an extensive listing of monographs on the history of the eastern states.

Unfortunately, he fails to balance these non-Mormon accounts, and the reader has the right to ask for more extensive rebuttal, at several points in the study, from Mormon apologists. The western historian, attempting to grope his way through a labyrinth of unevaluated literature on the Latter-day Saints, must pass a personal judgment on its authenticity and importance; he also is obligated to analyze the motives that activated such publications. Facing this hazard, Professor Hirshson all but ignores the best of Mormon erudition — or fails to understand the thrust of its scholarship — rather, he clearly and consistently prefers non-Mormon sources, usually of a highly critical nature.

A definitive biography of Brigham Young must demonstrate the impact of Joseph Smith upon his successor's career because it was delicately interlaced with the religious mysticism and secular Utopianism of the first Church President. The author's apparent failure to understand Brigham Young's dynamic, almost uncontrollable drive to preserve Joseph Smith's theology and the dynasty of Zion injects a pedestrian quality into the early chapters of *The Lion of the Lord*.

Plodding through two chapters of repetitious discussion on polygamy, the reader finds Brigham Young's matrimonial alliances have been scrupulously gleaned from the Stanley S. Ivins' collection, and no doubt present a most comprehensive, but unsubstantiated, record of this elusive subject. Conflicting testimony on polygamy suggests that any judgment springs not from expertise, but point of view — the writer must attribute motives to the practitioner. *The Lion of the Lord* provides precious little insight on the subject and leaves the reader to conclude that Professor Hirshson is inclined rather to perpetuate nineteenth-century myths than to search for an understanding of the personal struggles created by "the peculiar institution."

While space limitations preclude a full account of errors in historic fact, several should not go unmentioned: forts were not erected in Wyoming to guard the eastern entrance of the Great Basin in 1849-1850 as Professor Hirshson suggests, but in 1853, when the Mormons were strong enough to challenge the alliance of mountaineers and Shoshonis. Two years later the Saints controlled ferries across the Green River, much to the chagrin of Jack Robinson and Elisha Ryan, former mountain men.

Hirshson's indifference to accuracy is conspicuous in his claim that Brigham Young failed to send any communication from the Salt Lake Valley from

July 24 to August 2, 1857. On the contrary, letters were dispatched daily to tarrying parties. Similarly, during this great trek into the wilderness Young was less sure of his ultimate destination than was the professor. In a dozen letters from 1846 to 1847 he reminded his captains that their destination was yet uncertain: "Where is Zion? Don't know?" he wrote to the General Council. "If there is any one here who can go & point out a stake I will give them all [of the teams] I have. . . ."

President Millard Fillmore divided territorial offices between gentiles and Mormons, and did not, as Professor Hirshson claims, appoint non-Mormons to "most of the posts."

Blinded by the "impeccable" reporting of the *New York Times* the author wrote: "At this time [1830's] Brigham could barely sign his name, let alone read a complex and detailed work. And Kimball, whose education was as meager as Brigham's, left no evidence he ever learned to read or write." Numerous letters and one diary of Young's dispute this. Likewise, the Church library which Professor Hirshson turned his back on contains several file boxes of Heber C. Kimball's letters and diaries.

Finally, the New York scholar credits himself with the first biography of Brigham Young in fifty years — then lists the works of Werner (1925) and Nibley (1936). The complimentary biographies of Susan Young Gates (1930) and Ray West (1957) are not cited.

The author's barely concealed antagonism to the Saints bleeds the cause of scholarship. As to the rise of Mormonism, he writes: "In the 1830's, Mormonism, a mixture of superstition and tradition, appealed, as the Saints themselves admitted, to the fearful, the credulous, and the downtrodden" (p. 16). Addressing himself to the Mormon financial difficulties in Kirtland, he states, "Soon after returning to Kirtland, Young, Smith, and other prominent Saints assembled at the Prophet's house and for a week lived on rum, brandy, gin, and port wine. During that time, according to the affidavit of one witness, Smith asserted he had founded the bank because God told him to 'milk the Gentiles'" (pp. 25-26). Politics in Utah "became a device for gain, and candidates for office were pawns in a game. To the Mormons democracy and freedom of thought were meaningless words" (p. 94).

Reading *The Lion of the Lord* is a frustrating experience. Hirshson deals with few questions about Brigham Young which have not been dealt with before, underlining the old adage that if you wish to find new answers to old problems, you must ask new questions.