

RLDS *ex nihilo* creation/LDS preexistent spirit and matter; RLDS eternalism/LDS temporalism; RLDS being/LDS becoming; the greater RLDS emphasis on grace and determinism/the LDS commitment to works and free will; RLDS immateriality/LDS materiality in the conception of God; RLDS trinitarianism/LDS tri-theism; RLDS monism/LDS pluralism.

It is not surprising to find Edwards writing that "the LDS view is one of the few—if not the only—philosophically distinctive religions that exist in any large following in America with the exception of Christian Science" (p. 87), or that "there are more theological differences . . . between the Reorganization and the Latter-day Saints than between the RLDS and the Protestant, Catholic, or Jew" (p. 87). But he continues with the observation that "the affinity of RLDS theology for the American mainstream is strengthened by lack of a genuinely official RLDS theological position—and the even more conspicuous lack of an attempt to identify and formulate such a position" (p. 87). It is not clear whether this is intended simply as a descriptive report on the Reorganization or also as a negative judgment on the state of its doctrine. I suspect that it is both.

On a number of metaphysical issues—for example, the divine infiniteness, pre-existence, predestination and free will, or the materiality of God—Edwards seems to regard the current LDS position as being more in keeping with the Doctrine and Covenants and Joseph Smith's later thought than are the typical corresponding RLDS

beliefs. At least in this matter his position is somewhat ambiguous. In its emphasis on the divine absolutism and immanence, he even sees the RLDS theology in a flirtation with pantheism. It is apparent that Edwards is not a captive of either Joseph Smith or the Doctrine and Covenants. He seems to have far more freedom to pursue his ideas without restraint than has typically been the case with LDS theologians. All in all, he strikes me as being an admirably free soul. This is very evident in his comment that Joseph Smith "gathered his own teaching into the Book of Mormon, a speculative work that gives the story of his experience, and the truths he arrived at from considering the experiences" (p. 33).

Here as elsewhere Edwards's humor ranges from the sophisticated to the earthy. A sophisticated sample: "In a twelve-page discourse by the Basic Beliefs Committee, people are represented as those who are free and loved, but so beset with crime, corruption, sin, and apathy that it would make an existentialist weep" (p. 80); or, the RLDS "assumption that people are good but being a person is an awful condition to be in" (p. 80). Or on the earthy side: "We have a long tradition of ignoring our history because we somehow feel it is impossible to open a closet without revealing a skeleton" (p. 87); "Most [RLDS] commentaries of the past fifty years discuss evil only in terms of behavior; trying to get some official statement on the nature of evil and its place in God's world is akin to milking a steer" (p. 69). It is comforting to know that somewhere in the high places of Mormondom, laughter is still tolerated.

The Secular Side of the Saints

America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power by Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 278 pp., sources, index.

Reviewed by L. Jackson Newell, professor and dean, University of Utah, and co-editor of *DIALOGUE*.

IT WASN'T written primarily for a Mormon audience. And it wasn't expected to sell well in Salt Lake City. But Bob Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, both outsiders to the LDS Church and to Utah, have written a book of profound interest to Mormon readers. Over 15,000 copies of *Amer-*

ica's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power sold within six months of the book's release in the fall of 1984. It's selling in Salt Lake City like nowhere else. All this, despite a concerted effort by Church spokesmen to label the volume as mean-spirited muckraking.

What lies behind the success of *America's Saints*? I believe it is a combination of two factors: years of bottled-up curiosity among Mormons about how the Church bureaucracy works, and a creditable if imperfect attempt to explain it. LDS leaders do an excellent job describing the purposes of Church programs and motivating members to make them work. And achievements are frequently cited with satisfaction. But what member doesn't wonder how "Correlation" works, who screens lesson manuals, what criteria are used, and why seemingly good ideas are mysteriously shelved? Who isn't curious about the disposition of their tithes and offerings — not out of suspicion, but from a natural desire to know what one's generosity has helped make possible? Members seldom voice questions such as these, but Gottlieb and Wiley had the temerity to ask. They asked Church spokesmen, Church leaders and ordinary members. They also scoured public records, read the Doctrine and Covenants, and consulted scholarly sources both inside and outside the faith. It took them five years, but they came up with more than they, or anyone else, thought they would find.

What are the unique contributions of the book? The historical material presented in *America's Saints*, at least that pertaining to the pre-1970s, is hardly new. Serious students of the culture have seen most of the earlier information, for instance, in the pages of *DIALOGUE*. But the authors' review of historical events has provided a useful context for examining contemporary issues, and they have pressed their quest for information right up to the present.

If there is one place the "new Mormon history" has fallen short, it is in treating recent events. This is a traditional failing of professional historians, due to lack

of sources and the risk of drawing premature conclusions; but it is accentuated among LDS historians because of added sensitivities about criticizing living leaders. Gottlieb and Wiley are neither historians nor Latter-day Saints, however, so they have pushed ahead where others have chosen not to explore. Journalists, after all, are disposed to deal with the present (and recent past) in a way that historians are not. Thus, the reader of *America's Saints* is treated to rare recent information about the operation of the Church in Central and South America, contemporary financial practices and problems, and efforts by the Special Affairs Committee to influence local, state, and federal policies. The authors also examine organizational stresses brought about by the recent emergence of a pluralistic global membership governed by a rather monolithic, predominantly American, middle class theocracy.

One must credit this book with being balanced. The authors interviewed everyone available — but they were limited by restrictions many Church leaders and spokesmen placed upon themselves, or had placed upon them by others. Since a fair number of people spoke off the record, some of the insights and information cannot be traced to specific origins. A gossipy air sometimes surfaces, although the blame cannot be placed wholly at the feet of the authors. They worked with what they were able to obtain. My point is that balance is especially difficult when sources are incomplete. I am aware, for instance, of several enticing but unsubstantiated stories that the authors chose to leave out, simply because they would have raised difficult questions without providing sufficient evidence for a fair and reasonable analysis. I do wish, however, that they and their publisher had provided standard footnotes and a complete bibliography, rather than the annoyingly general list of "sources" associated with each chapter.

The most vocal critics of *America's Saints* have assailed the book for treating the LDS Church as though it were a secu-

lar institution — completely ignoring, they say, its spiritual dimensions. Yet the authors did not set out to explore Mormon theology or the character of Mormon community life (for which they gained great respect). They sought instead to explain the rise of Church involvement in the larger society, from the politics of opposing the Equal Rights Amendment to the intricacies of financing a global religious organization. In my view, the Church cannot claim immunity from secular criticism when it acts in the secular sphere. In the long run, efforts to secure such immunity

can only be self-destructive. Without the honest perceptions of outsiders, we will not be stimulated to ask the difficult questions that can renew our courage to examine discrepancies that inevitably crop up between our spiritual values and our organizational practices.

America's Saints has become a best-selling book among the Mormons precisely because we need the kind of frank examination that Gottlieb and Wiley have provided. One hopes we have retained the capacity to learn from those with whom we share less than complete accord.

The Ultimate Stegner Interview

Conversations with Wallace Stegner on Western History and Literature by Wallace Stegner and Richard W. Etulain (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983), 200 pp., \$15.

Reviewed by Gary Topping, curator of manuscripts, Utah State Historical Society.

WITH THE POSSIBLE exception of Louis L'Amour, Wallace Stegner has probably been interviewed more frequently than any other living Western writer. This is an impressive tribute to Stegner's accessibility to representatives of both scholarly and popular publications, and to his seemingly perennial appeal to audiences at many levels. Even taken together, though, the Stegner interviews have not, until recently, given us a truly comprehensive view of the man, his ideas, and his literary craft. Richard Etulain's cycle of ten interviews with Stegner — conceived, prepared, and edited with great skill — at last bridges those gaps.

The theme of the interviews is the complex mix of autobiography, history, and literature in Stegner's work. Few of his books stand squarely in any of those categories alone, and anyone who would understand them must learn to work the literary trigonometry that Etulain carries off so expertly. Roughly half of the interviews

are devoted to Stegner's life and, chronologically, each of his books, with one entire interview on his masterpiece, *Angle of Repose*. The remainder of the interviews deal with topics of especial significance in Stegner's life and thought: the Mormons, the land, and other writers of Western fiction and history.

The interviews contain a few surprises. The ending to his prize-winning *Angle of Repose*, for example, eluded Stegner until a publisher's deadline forced him to come up with something on very short notice. *Mormon Country*, he reveals, was primarily an exercise in nostalgia for a homesick Utah boy trapped in the East. These are amusing and unexpected disclosures for Stegner fans accustomed to appreciating his care and craftsmanship, but they show that Stegner even in offhand moments is still very good indeed.

Stegner is one of the rare non-Mormon writers who have written with sympathy, sensitivity, and perception about the Mormons; and the Latter-day Saints have repaid him with their respect and loyalty. Curiously, Mormon readers have allowed him to make critical comments, both in *Mormon Country* and *The Gathering of Zion*, that few if any Mormon writers would have been permitted. Stegner ad-