

Mormonism from the Top Down

A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism by Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), 307 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by M. Guy Bishop, assistant curator of social history, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

A KINGDOM TRANSFORMED is required reading for anyone who may feel that statistical analysis can make only negligible contributions to the study of Mormon history and culture. Those who were already believers in the value of combining historical research and social science methodology should be encouraged by the work of Gordon and Gary Shepherd. While many of their conclusions about the themes developed in 150 years of General Conference addresses will not surprise well-versed students of the subject, the statistical verification of long-held assumptions can be comforting.

Since conference speakers have almost exclusively been General Authorities, grassroots historians may argue that this monograph represents an intellectual history of the Mormon elite, not a true analysis of the development of Latter-day Saint history and culture. The Shepherds assert that Mormons' "paramount belief in modern revelation" has made a systematic content analysis of official speeches a valid barometer of the composite mind of Mormonism (p. 3). They may well be right but the proof of such a thesis lies outside of their study.

The authors clearly take exception to some of the conclusions about Mormon authoritarianism by anthropologist Mark Leone in *Roots of Modern Mormonism* (1979). While Leone has argued that the apparent authoritarianism and doctrinal orthodoxy of the Latter-day Saints is but an illusion, the Shepherds contend that the official viewpoints, as highlighted by con-

ference sermons, are vital to the religion (pp. 10-11). A major question raised by *A Kingdom Transformed* is whether the common religion of Mark Leone's individual Mormons along the Little Colorado River in east central Arizona was but a shadow of the official, institutionalized dogma emanating from Salt Lake City. Further studies focusing upon local Mormon congregations would be required to answer this query.

The strength of this book is to be found in its various tables and figures. Even to a reader who gets lost in or is bored by the authors' frequent discussions of sociological theory and theorists, the overall conclusions of the study, at least from a statistical standpoint, are clear. Mormon leaders were primarily concerned about Church government, persecution, and the enmity of non-Mormons during the first three decades of Latter-day Saint history. From about the 1860s to 1890, their concerns shifted to plural marriage, gentile antagonism, and obedience to gospel principles. Church (i.e. priesthood) authority and dedication to the gospel headed conference themes at the turn of the century, while missionary work and the divine nature of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling were stressed between 1920 and 1949. Post-war emphases have featured Jesus Christ, parenthood, and missionary work (p. 76). The absence of comments on the family prior to 1950 seemed surprising, but no other listings were unexpected.

The methodology employed and the total concentration upon official rhetoric has, in some instances, tended to skew reality. For instance, even a cursory perusal of Mormon diaries and letters for the pre-Utah period will reveal that the Prophet Joseph Smith as well as many of his followers were quite interested in familiar relations. However, as the authors note, conference attention to this subject was "unremarkable" during the formative years of

Mormonism (p. 87). The transformation of the Latter-day Saint religious institution from a small mid-nineteenth-century denomination to a major late-twentieth-century religion, and particularly the Church hierarchy's response to the perceived needs of the believers is the in-

tended purpose of *A Kingdom Transformed*. The book does go far toward accomplishing this; but future researchers most certainly will ask, as many currently are asking, whether the pronouncements of the General Authorities truly speak for all Mormons at all times.

Mining Mormon Gold

Mormon Gold: The Story of California's Mormon Argonauts, by J. Kenneth Davies. (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Company, 1984)+429 pp. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Brigham D. Madsen, Professor Emeritus of History, University of Utah.

THIS BOOK IS AS much a history of the Mormon Church in California during the 1847-57 decade as it is a history of Mormon gold mining. The author gives a plethora of detail concerning both subjects, based on numerous diaries, journals, tithing records, and other important documents. In somewhat chronological fashion, he examines Mormon efforts at gold digging from the first strike at Sutter's mill to the final withdrawal of the Saints from California as a result of Brigham Young's order to return to Utah when Albert Sidney Johnson's Army approached the territory in 1857. Some good maps identify various mining camps and settlements frequented by Mormon gold-seekers and proselyters during these years. Attractive early pencil drawings and selected pictures of California scenes are interesting illustrations. The text is readable and written with clarity.

The author's main point, earlier researched by Leonard J. Arrington and Eugene E. Campbell, among others, is Brigham Young's double-edged policy of publicly discouraging his Saints from deserting the valleys of Utah for the golden fleshpots of California while secretly dispatching "gold missions" to the diggings to acquire the liquid capital necessary for the economic establishment of the Mormon

Church in Salt Lake Valley. Davies's research is so comprehensive and carefully done that the reader is left with little doubt about Young's intentions in California. In fact, any reader must be impressed that so much could be found out about the hundreds of individuals, plus their origins and family relationships, who participated in the California rush. The book is a genealogist's gold mine of information; the Index of Personal Names is a valuable addition to the Subject Index. The book seems intended for a mostly Mormon audience, as the author assumes that the reader will understand his incidental references to events in Utah history and to such LDS practices as the Word of Wisdom.

The chief defect of the book is in its haphazard organization and repetitive references. The reader must deal with a kaleidoscope of events and people in Davies's rather topical approach set in a rough chronology. A conclusion sums up the author's analysis and major objective, but some summaries and transitional paragraphs at the end of each chapter would have offered some guide posts to keep the reader on a clearly marked path. An additional package of 63 pages of appendices is offered by an order blank inserted in the book, but nowhere is there a description of the contents of the appendices.

Mormon Gold will be a must for anyone interested in the activities of the Mormon people in California from the discovery of gold to 1857, and especially for scholars working in the field. Though it lacks continuity as a narrative, it is a whole library packed with information.