

REVIEWS

In loco parentis — Alive and Well in Provo

Brigham Young University: A House of Faith by Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1985), 513 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Anthony W. Morgan, associate professor of Educational Administration and vice president of the University of Utah.

DAVID RIESMAN, in his landmark study of American higher education entitled *The Academic Revolution* (1969), was fascinated by BYU and insightfully observes: "Despite academic upgrading, Brigham Young has not lost its sectarian character nor even been troubled by the kinds of public soul-searching that go on in the milieu tied to the National Council of Churches and in intellectual Catholic circles. Potential conflicts between religious and secular beliefs seem to have been handled largely by compartmentalization and avoidance of public debate" (p. 331). Bergera and Priddis attempt to bring some of these conflicts to public debate or at least public light through their historical research.

The book is not a typical institutional history — the "family biography" replete with sentimentality and a parade of "great men" (presidents) and expansion (buildings) despite its first chapter on presidents and the sixth and seventh chapters on student activities and athletics. The book concentrates on issues where faith or authority have conflicted with norms of free inquiry and expression. The authors' expressed purpose is to explore these conflicts by investigating selected themes in

the institution's past rather than to construct a comprehensive institutional history.

The reader is introduced to the origins and development of BYU through biographical vignettes of its eight presidents. In the second chapter, the authors introduce a series of issues, ranging from the curriculum to compulsory tithing, to illustrate the underlying tensions of balancing religion and academics. The next six chapters then deal in greater depth with this balancing dilemma in the following areas: standards and the honor code; organic evolution; partisan politics; student government, social clubs and newspapers; inter-collegiate athletics; and arts, entertainment and literature. While incidents are drawn from various periods of BYU's history to illustrate the difficulty of maintaining an equilibrium, the events of the more recent past predominate. The final chapter, entitled "Academics and Intellectual Pursuits," reviews evaluations of BYU's academic standing and attempts to assess the place given intellectualism in the Church's university.

The book is fascinating precisely because of what Riesman termed the absence of public debate over these issues in the case of BYU. The absence has created a vacuum attracting interest in writings which detail instances and issues heretofore substantiated largely by rumor.

One could ask whether the selection of issues was based on the "level of controversy" engendered or on some concept of the importance of the issue to a Mormon philosophy of education. Those who find in the book an unbalanced view of the

totality of the BYU experience will probably claim the former. The reader should certainly place the BYU experience, as reflected in this book, in the context of similar conflicts at other religious colleges. Here the authors are remiss in not giving readers a context for the resolution of ecclesiastical and authoritarian issues at BYU compared to Notre Dame or Baylor, for example.

The chapters are also somewhat uneven in their capturing of the dilemmas of faith and intellect as well as in their quality of writing. The "Organic Evolution Controversy" chapter is superb in framing, developing, and documenting the issues. Other chapters, such as those on student life, athletics, and academics do not fare as well.

Source material and documentation in the book are fascinating, mysterious, and frustrating. The authors have somehow managed to gain access to an amazing range of heretofore closed sources such as President Wilkinson's diary and memos from presidents to the Board of Trustees and individual general authorities of the Church. Documents noted as "copy in the authors' possession" will, I am sure, raise interest and questions among researchers and concern among administrators for security of documents. The frustrating part of their documentation stems primarily from the "endnote" system used in publication where footnotes are generally given by paragraph rather than individual citations in the text. Under this system, it is sometimes difficult to attribute a particular point made to a specific source.

Many of the policies, activities, and personalities described in the book are reminiscent of the era of ante-bellum colleges, concerned more with student behavior than academics, and seem anachronistic when viewed from the perspective of modern secular universities. President Wilkinson's policies and attitudes, as reflected in his diary and correspondence, were amazingly paternalistic and authoritarian for the times, and what is more incredible, apparently tolerated by the majority of

students, faculty and trustees. One wonders, after reading of the role conflicts experienced by various BYU presidents, how anyone could last very long in this presidency. In fact one wonders why anyone would want the job!

The authors' "student perspective" is evident throughout the book in the selection of topics and discussion of issues. Indeed, the book has much more to say about student-administration politics than it does about faculty politics or the university as a whole. The authors lament, for example, that students were not given the right of naming the student center—a prerogative jealously guarded by governing boards everywhere. The high proportion of student newspaper citations may also lend greater credence to the reliability of that source than is advisable. In their treatment of the Vietnam years, the authors portray student sentiments and activities but little is said of faculty perceptions.

"In loco parentis," the legal doctrine that the institution acts in the place of parents, is portrayed throughout the book as being an overriding concern of Church authorities and parents—a characteristic of most denominational colleges. In an era of increasing secularization of private colleges, BYU clearly remains, and is likely to remain, thoroughly denominational and for that reason very attractive to parents who find solace in a strong, pervasive, and safe "in loco parentis" environment.

Does the book succeed in what it sets out to do, i.e., outlining the struggles of blending academics and faith? Yes, I believe it does, due largely to its addressing forthrightly "sensitive" issues and its citation of significant new documentation. I would highly recommend the book to those interested in the history and development of BYU as an institution and those with a general interest in Mormon attitudes and practices toward education and intellectual activity. The book does not go as far as I would like in its explication of a Mormon philosophy of education. The final chapter starts down this path but then disintegrates

into a potpourri of seeming afterthoughts. I would like to see the authors write a follow-up article synthesizing their views on the overarching philosophical questions raised in the book: What is the Mormon

philosophy of education? Is BYU, as portrayed by the authors, an accurate embodiment of Mormon educational attitudes and philosophy? Are those attitudes and philosophy evolving? And should they?

BRIEF NOTICES

Mormons & Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City by Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Co., 1984), 360 pp.

NOT SINCE *The History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders* by Edward W. Tullidge, published in 1886, has a serious history of Utah's capital city appeared. While many areas of Utah history have received extensive study in recent years, Salt Lake City has been mainly bypassed.

BYU history professors Thomas G. Alexander and James B. Allen have attempted to remedy this situation with their new book *Mormons & Gentiles*, part of a series in Western urban history.

Chronologically, they trace the growth and development of the city, treating not only political, but also social, commercial, and cultural history. Based on city council minutes, newspaper accounts, oral histories, etc., the authors often shed light on unfamiliar aspects of the city's history. Particularly interesting are the chapters on the twentieth-century city.

The text is not annotated but each chapter contains a useful bibliography.

Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons edited with an introduction by Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985), xvii, 412 pp., \$12.95.

SUPPORTING SAINTS adds another needed volume of information on the lives of early Utah Mormons. The volume has two purposes: (1) to show the diverse lives of early Utah pioneers and (2) to show that

persons who were not always in the lime-light made important contributions. Authors and subjects were chosen to give a broad view of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint experience.

Chapters include information on Rachel R. Grant, mother of Heber J. Grant; William Howells, the first LDS missionary to France; Andrew Jenson, LDS historian; Martha Cragun Cox, a schoolteacher; Truman O. Angell, architect of the Salt Lake Temple; Richard Ballantyne, who served a mission to India from 1849–1856; John Lyon, territorial librarian for sixteen years and a poet; Lucy Hannah White Flake, polygamous wife and early colonizer on the Arizona frontier; Elijah F. Sheets, who served as bishop for forty-eight years of the Salt Lake Eighth Ward; Edward Hunter, early Presiding Bishop of the LDS Church; Emmeline B. Wells, editor of the *Woman's Exponent* and early suffragist; Jacob Spori, an early missionary to Switzerland and educator; and Angus M. Cannon, who served as Salt Lake Stake president for twenty-eight years.

The Book of Mormon: A Guide to Christian Living by Lowell L. Bennion (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), vii, 130 pp., \$8.95.

BENNION, RETIRED DIRECTOR of the LDS Institute of Religion at the University of Utah, feels that "the Book of Mormon is not a textbook in any science, not even a historical account or a theological treatise, but a religious record of three migrations to the Western Hemisphere." He stresses that the Book of Mormon should be read for what it teaches about life.