

people who would make acceptance of the distortions and deception that came with polygamy into a test of faith: "The [writer] with Christian concerns will find in modern life distortions which are repugnant to him, and his problem will be to make these appear as distortions to an audience which is used to seeing them as natural. . . . When you can assume that your audience holds

the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock — to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures" (as quoted in *Books and Religion* 14, no. 5 [6 May/June 1986] p. 6).

## Move Over, *Fortune* "500"

*The Mormon Corporate Empire* by John Heinerman and Anson Shupe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 293 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by William P. MacKinnon of Birmingham, Michigan, a Presbyterian and officer of a large, multi-division manufacturing company based in Detroit. His articles and book reviews on Western Americana and Mormon affairs have appeared in journals in this country as well as in the United Kingdom over the past twenty-five years.

WHEN IT COMES to explaining economic matters, Americans have difficulty resisting conspiracy theories and are even more fascinated with their second cousin, the exposé. Small wonder, then, that in a single week last July *Fortune* and the *Wall Street Journal* probed the undisclosed wealth of the Rockefeller family and the Palestine Liberation Organization, respectively, while Congress's Joint Economic Committee released its long-awaited report on the concentration of wealth in the United States. Within this American tradition and the LDS Church's own controversial history, one should read and must evaluate *The Mormon Corporate Empire*.

John Heinerman, a Mormon medical anthropologist who directs Salt Lake City's Anthropological Research Center, and Anson Shupe, a Methodist associate director of the Center for Social Research at the University of Texas-Arlington, view themselves as academics approaching their task — an examination of the LDS Church

as "a rising, authoritarian, powerful group" (p. x)—as a public service rather than from either an anti-religious or anti-democratic perspective. The result is six chapters of uneven quality and usefulness focusing on subjects that range widely from the Church's asset value to its heartburn over articles written by some BYU faculty members for *DIALOGUE*.

Chapter 1 ("The Emerging Kingdom of the Saints") sets forth the book's premise, i.e., that the Mormon Church is not what it seems to be (a group of "well-scrubbed" people who have been assimilated into the mainstream of American life and values) but rather is a corporate hierarchy driven to establish over time a Mormon theocracy (kingdom) intended to supplant not only all other religions but also a collapsing U.S. government.

The driving force behind this thrust, as the authors see it, is a "post-millennialist" theology which stresses the need for Mormon political and financial influence to make appropriate preparations for the second coming of Christ. The result: a gross asset value for the Church estimated by Heinerman and Shupe at nearly \$8 billion and a chain of events by which "Ronald Reagan's administration has employed more Mormons, particularly in policy-relevant positions, than any other president's" (p. 4).

What plainly alarms the authors is their belief that "Mormons are making important strides behind the scenes toward fulfilling the promise of post-millennialism.

Their success is directly related to general public ignorance about their methods and ends" (p. 28).

The balance of the book deals with the details of the holdings and influence that constitute "the emerging Mormon empire" (p. 28). Chapter 2 ("From Telegraph to Satellite"), for example, explores at length the LDS Church's investments in mass communications — especially radio, television and newspapers — and its influence with the Federal Communications Commission. This examination is, in turn, rooted in the authors' view of communications as a key element of the Mormon strategy for establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Although Heinerman and Shupe do not analyze the portfolios of other churches, they assert, probably correctly, that the LDS holdings of broadcast facilities (including the largest FM station in New York City) exceed those of any other religious organization in the world. In total, they estimate the value of directly owned LDS Church communications properties to be \$547.6 million.

Chapter 3 ("LDS, Incorporated") analyzes in considerable detail the balance of the Church's business holdings in such fields as agribusiness, public utilities, securities, energy, minerals, and real estate, a portfolio with an estimated asset value of \$7.3 billion. When the yield from these holdings is combined with tithes and contributions from a worldwide membership of nearly 6 million people, they calculate an annual inflow of nearly \$2 billion to the Church.

Notwithstanding their alarm over the growth and influence of this economic force, Heinerman and Shupe stress the grounding of the Church's fifty-six General Authorities in corporate and public affairs and comment, "No one has ever seriously suggested that they govern 'LDS, Inc.' for personal gain. In an age of exorbitant salaries lavished not only on movie, television, and sports personalities but also on top corporate executives, the LDS leadership is an anomaly" (pp. 87-88).

In Chapter 4 ("The Political and Military Power of the Latter-day Saints"), the authors turn from economic matters to what they perceive as growing LDS influence in the armed forces, Congress, the regulatory agencies, CIA, and FBI. They then discuss the impact of this influence on such policy issues as the siting decision for the MX missile program, the Equal Rights Amendment, and legal decisions regarding abortion. After listing a wide variety of prominent Mormons in senior federal positions, the authors maneuver through a series of ambiguous and sometimes ambivalent assessments about the meaning of this LDS presence in Washington:

— "While we do not suggest they [Mormons rising to high federal office] have done so because of any conspiracy or grand design, nevertheless on occasion, as we demonstrate in this chapter, the LDS leadership has appealed to these members' loyalties as a lever for exerting Church influence on domestic and international policies of the U.S. Government" (p. 129).

— "We do not mean to suggest that all Mormons in Washington vote on or promote every policy with some knee-jerk concern for how the Salt Lake City elders will react. There is evidence to the contrary. . . . Yet many Mormons in public service are conscious of their role as informal emissaries of the Church and use their official influence to further Church interests" (p. 137).

— "The Church is bolder in Utah and more circumspect in Washington, D.C., but the operating principle is the same: the designation *Mormon* politician/bureaucrat/official is supposed to mean, at least in the eyes of some Church officials, special consideration of LDS Church interests" (p. 141).

— "While we are a long way in the United States from a theocracy, there is nevertheless a *de facto* effort under way that is something of the sort, not just in Utah but in Washington, D.C."

"Their activity does not by any means constitute a conspiracy, for much of it

occurs aboveboard though it is not rigorously publicized by the media. Rather, it is something more akin to a social movement" (p. 142).

Following this somewhat confusing, if not alarming, discussion, the book moves on to "The Darker Side of Mormonism," primarily a potpourri of various situations in which the authors perceive that the Church's behavior deviates from its image in such widely diverse arenas as the welfare system, authoritarianism, censorship, racial discrimination, and tax avoidance.

The book closes with a restatement of the Church's post-millennialist theology and the authors' perception of its threat to religious pluralism; here Heinerman and Shupe also plead for an extension of "the same criticism, skepticism and expectation of accountability to the LDS Church that Americans now eagerly employ when they examine post-Watergate public officials" (p. 257).

Although this volume is only the latest in a long line of attempts to analyze the wealth of the Mormon Church, I believe that Heinerman and Shupe have developed perhaps the most complete list of such assets compiled to date, although it is somewhat surprising to find no mention here of ZCMI. They appear to have been diligent in using a variety of advisors and specialists in attempting to arrive at asset values once property holdings were discovered. Unfortunately, much of this analysis appears to have been developed during 1982-84 but disregards the subsequent bull market in securities during 1985-86. The estimated assets of \$8 billion may seriously understate the value of the LDS Church's portfolio based on current values, although the authors deliberately attempted to be conservative in their calculations.

Finally, it could be argued that Heinerman and Shupe have done a good job of explaining the religious underpinnings of Mormon economic pursuits and success and have captured as well as "outsiders" might be expected to do the operating style of the Church. In this respect, it is unfortu-

nate that the book and its analysis of this style was finalized during the brief period between President Spencer Kimball's death and Ezra Taft Benson's succession.

On the negative side, the book is riddled with minor but annoying inaccuracies: the name of the Church's management consulting firm is mangled repeatedly as Crescent (rather than Cresap), McCormick and Paget; Heber C. Kimball rather than Brigham Young is identified as LDS president in 1857 (p. 129); the size of Utah's contribution to the Civil War effort is described inaccurately as a regiment rather than a company (p. 130); Paul Laxalt is misidentified as a sitting U.S. Senator from Utah rather than Nevada (p. 136); and the MX missile system, a project conceived to use a transportation web of surface roads, is described as one utilizing tunnels (p. 173). Missed in the process is an understanding of the economic tensions which helped to bring one-third of the United States Army down upon Brigham Young during 1857-58, the most extensive and expensive federal military undertaking between the Mexican and Civil Wars.

Of more substantive concern to me is the near-vacuum in which the authors ask us to consider their analysis; they provide no comparative information about other churches and the political/economic success of their members.

What is one to make of a rapidly growing institution of 6 million members—some of whom are in positions of substantial power and authority—with an asset value and annual income approaching \$8 billion and \$2 billion, respectively? Are these indicators even "large" or significant—let alone alarming—within the context of Judaism, the Roman Catholic Church, and a variety of Protestant denominations?

How does one feel about the numbers and influence of Mormons who have served recently as cabinet officers—Ezra Taft Benson, George W. Romney, David Kennedy, Stuart Udall, Terrell H. Bell, and

others — when one considers the hundreds of non-Mormons who have done likewise?

Similar questions arise when one considers Heinerman and Shupe's concerns over LDS censorship and doctrinal rigidity alongside Governor Mario Cuomo's and Geraldine Ferraro's joustings with the Archbishop of New York and the Catholic Church's own conflicts with an eclectic assortment of bishops, theologians, and priest-novelists. The absence of context seriously handicaps the reader's ability to evaluate the scene which Heinerman and Shupe view with such alarm.

Equally serious is the lack of clarity which the authors bring to the relationship between LDS Church pronouncements and goals and the behavior of its individual members. The ambiguities and ambivalences of Chapter 4 ("The Political and Military Power of the Latter-day Saints") have been noted. How then is one to view the theft of classified documents by a Mormon Navy yeoman on the staff of National Security Advisor Alexander Haig and last summer's espionage conviction of former Mormon and FBI agent Richard W. Miller? Are these incidents reflections of LDS Church goals or is it more relevant that the CIA's personnel director is a Mormon and that Miller's FBI supervisor in Los Angeles is an LDS bishop?

From the standpoint of the LDS General Authorities, is it more significant that Air Force Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, a Mormon, was National Security Advisor to President Ford or that as a retiree he has occasionally criticized aspects of President Reagan's foreign policy? One wonders about the authors' reaction to the post-publication chain of events by which President Reagan appointed General Scowcroft to the Tower Commission to investigate the NSC as well as Senator Ernest F. Hollings's sensational charges involving an alleged "Utah conspiracy" between Dr. James C. Fletcher, NASA's administrator, and Morton Thiokol Inc.'s Wasatch Division.

It is my belief that Heinerman and Shupe would have been more on target

had they spent less time speculating about Church attempts to control the federal government and economy and given more thought to pondering the extent to which Utah — perhaps proportionately more so than most other states — is awash in incidents of securities and other commercial fraud, a spectacle on which state and federal securities authorities have commented. In many cases, a more accurate scenario would be one of individual Mormons victimizing co-religionists — as in the spectacular bombings and forgeries of the Mark Hofmann case which involved the deaths of one Mormon bishop and the wife of another, and attempts to defraud members of the Council of Twelve itself — than of a sinister, Church-inspired conspiracy against gentiles.

In 1983, *Forbes* noted that in recent years at least ten separate swindles had been uncovered in Utah involving more than 9,000 people (1 percent of Utah's adults) and losses estimated at more than \$200 million. In asking itself "why?" the magazine described Utah as "fertile soil for swindles" because of excessive trust among LDS members: "Most of those bilked are Mormons, and the bilkers, too, profess to be upstanding members of the church and use church connections" (*Forbes*, 20 June 1983, p. 33).

In December 1984, Governor Scott M. Matheson's Securities Fraud Task Force noted with alarm that "the appeal of Utah to legitimate new business has been seriously undermined because of its unfavorable reputation for securities fraud." The group then noted that "Utah's citizens also appear more susceptible to fraudulent schemes than people in most other states. . . . [They] rely . . . on personal and religious relationships. Several investment schemes have relied directly or indirectly upon religious affiliations. . . . Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) are particularly susceptible to various schemes because faith in one another spawns promoters [who] take advantage of 'the Mormon Connection' "

("Report of the Governor's Securities Fraud Task Force," Dec. 1984, pp. 1, 2, 11).

Had Heinerman and Shupe proceeded further with their intriguing analysis of post-millennialism and its ultimate impact on ethics and individual economic behavior, we might have emerged from the thicket with a better understanding of the plight of a number of Mormon businessmen caught up in public controversies.

In reviewing *The Mormon Corporate Empire* for the Conference Board's journal, Martin E. Marty, a non-Mormon professor of religious history at the University of Chicago, noted that while Heinerman and Shupe had alerted the reader to the activities and aspirations of the LDS Church, they were too vague about what the aroused reader was to do:

"To cry out in the name of separation of church and state is not really effective.

Most of what the Mormons do, one must presume, is more legal than not. . . . Insofar as Heinerman and Shupe have roused citizens, they may have done a bit to disturb the civil peace in the short run and produce a healthier society for the longer haul" (*Across the Board*, July/Aug. 1986, p. 63).

Perhaps another way to think about *The Mormon Corporate Empire* is to lay its style and orientation alongside the *Wall Street Journal's* headlines for its 21 July 1986 exposé on the Palestine Liberation Organization: "Big Business/Aside From Being A Movement, the PLO Is a Financial Giant/It Operates Farms in Africa, Makes Shoes in Lebanon; Huge Outlays for Welfare/Yasser Arafat's Secret Budget." Both pieces are similar in tone but are worth reading with a certain amount of healthy skepticism and balance in mind.

