

Heaven, stresses that humankind has always sought for a loving, nurturing presence. Wilcox traces this desire to the teachings of such early Church leaders as Erastus Snow, who taught that "God" was actually the combination of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, that our Heavenly Parents were God. She reports that certain early Church authorities believed Heavenly Mother was actually the third member of the godhead, or the Holy Spirit. However, because of paucity of official Church pronouncements on her existence and characteristics, a grassroots "Mother in Heaven" movement has mushroomed among Latter-day Saint women. Perhaps this widening folk theology will prompt Mormon theologians to more closely examine and more clearly define her.

In a second essay, Wilcox examines the roots of the Mormon emphasis on the mothering role. She identifies many of the ill-defined and too well-defined roles and expectations of Mormon mothers, as well as their joys and blessings. She documents Church dicta against working women, which blame them for such misfortunes as neglected, delinquent, uncared-for children (ignoring the fact that most of these children are being tended by their fathers, babysitters, or in daycare centers). The Church equates motherhood with godhood, emphasizing that mothers perform the same holy calling as our Heavenly Father does—without realizing that by making motherhood sacred they are simultaneously excusing fathers from any real participation in or responsibility for parenting. Wilcox points out that fortunately the absentee-father role is changing, that fathers today are taking a much more active, hands-on role in parenting; but she also notes that this is happening not because our theology

has changed, but because men are discovering that fatherhood is fulfilling.

While I am enthusiastic about most of this book, I am surprised that some things were left unsaid. The authors have successfully articulated questions and issues, but I was sometimes left wondering what women really want. Priesthood? And what do I want, after reading about the way things used to be and speculating on how they could or should be? What purpose does sisterhood serve, how does it better our lot? Is it just a way to comfort and support each other until the next life when everything will be made right? I found no answers—only mild frustration and hope for amelioration. I would have liked to see some contemporary sisterhood networks examined; perhaps the relationships/bonds formed with full-time sister missionaries, or a study of university students or of student wives, who often form particularly strong, emotional ties.

In the past, I have avoided speaking or thinking about Mormon women's issues, not wanting to be out of harmony with the Church or fearing that once I started voicing my problems I'd never shut up. This book has demonstrated that there are others in the Church—my sisters—who have not only felt many of the same frustrations and problems about being a woman in the Church but have quietly and intelligently examined these questions. Not only do I feel a sisterhood with them because of our common questions and feelings, but I have renewed hope that the condition of women in the Church can and indeed will improve. *Sisters in Spirit* invigorated and challenged me. It should appeal not only to students of women's issues, but to all Church members and authorities as well.

History of Historians

Mormons and Their Historians by Davis Bitton and Leonard Arrington (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 213 pp., \$20.00.

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

THAT SUCH A VOLUME AS THIS could be written at all is happy testimony to the development of a Mormon historiographical tradition. Its appearance at this late date, however — over a century and a half after the Church's foundation — is less happy evidence of just how slowly that tradition has matured. The rise of a scientific, objective Mormon historiography began, according to the authors, barely thirty years ago, and there are still fewer outstanding practitioners of that craft than one would like to see, though clearly the field is thriving both numerically and intellectually.

It is thriving so well, in fact, that few readers are going to be satisfied with this brief and shallow sketch of the bold contours of the Mormon historiographical tradition, welcome as it is. These two senior scholars simply present too few historians and works, too little sustained analysis, too little comparison with intellectual currents outside of Mormondom, and too few recommendations for fruitful new directions for this study to stand as anything but the barest of introductions.

The book has its undeniable strengths. Those of us who daily ply the trade routes of Mormon literature generally know something of Edward Tullidge through the articles of Ronald W. Walker on the Godbe circle and B. H. Roberts through Davis Bitton's studies. But what do most of us know of Orson Whitney, to whose fat volumes we keep turning, or Andrew Love Neff, or even that awe-inspiring engine of compilation Andrew Jenson, unless we have taken the time to trudge through his lengthy autobiography? The thumbnail sketches of the lives and works of these men, as well as of Willard Richards and George A. Smith, are most welcome and will enable us to use those older histories with enhanced understanding and enjoyment.

In a sense, though, the biographical chapters through the one on B. H. Roberts, which comprise roughly the first half of the volume, are the least satisfying ones. Bitton and Arrington chide some of the early historians, in their concern to promote the

theological and historical uniqueness of the Church, for their inability to recognize that anything other than the golden plates and Joseph Smith's revelations could have fashioned Mormonism. But the authors themselves have failed generally to examine intellectual currents outside of Mormonism that may have influenced its historiography.

Those early historians were clearly working within a Victorian aesthetic tradition heavily seasoned with Byronic romanticism, nationalism, and extravagant oratorical rhetoric, none of which were by any means unique to Mormonism. Yet Bitton and Arrington give us only the barest passing mention of such ideas with the exception of their discussion of Tullidge's Mormon nationalism. Many early Saints, including some of the historians, lacked extensive formal education. Newly appointed Church historians could not be expected to begin their tenures with remedial reading in George (or even Hubert Howe) Bancroft, Parkman, Prescott, or other prominent historians of their day. There was, nevertheless, an intellectual climate which they shared with those historians, and the authors of this study owe us an account of that climate.

If, as it seems clear, Mormon historiography turned an important corner in the 1940s, then surely Bitton and Arrington slight the agents of that reorientation, Bernard DeVoto, Fawn Brodie, Dale Morgan, and Juanita Brooks. In the perfunctory paragraphs on each in an omnibus chapter they are lumped together under the accurate but superficial principle that none possessed academic degrees in history. (Those four, in fact, succeeded so embarrassingly well at the historian's craft that we Ph.D.s might well pass over, rather than emphasize, their lack of credentials.)

The authors' hasty sketches of Brodie and Morgan are particularly inadequate. They damn Brodie with faint praise as a good storyteller but a faulty researcher, while failing to discuss extensively Morgan's history of the Latter-day Saints because it was left unfinished at his death.

One wonders, though, since Morgan's history was completed at least in draft form to 1830 and since his appraisal of Joseph Smith and his account of the writing of the Book of Mormon differ in few if any significant ways from Brodie's, does Morgan the researcher vindicate Brodie the storyteller? This and similar questions await fuller study.

The book's discussion of Mormon historiography since Arrington took over as Church historian in 1972 is generally adequate, though many will wonder why some figures are not discussed and others only briefly, particularly Arrington himself, surely a colossus of the field. Their account of the dismantling in 1982 of what Bitton has called the "Camelot" of the Church historian's office under Arrington is gentle—even to the point of whitewashing. Many regard that action as a banishment concomitant with the dramatically restricted access to the Church archives. Rather than offering suggestions for future historiographical development, the authors conclude with a plea, well taken but too gently urged, for the reopening of the Church archives as the necessary

prerequisite for future historiographical development.

Finally, the editors at the University of Utah Press have served Bitton and Arrington poorly. They allow such sentences as "Reaching more people was his narrative history" (p. 76) to stand, this example occurring, incredibly, at the beginning of the authors' account of B. H. Roberts's grammatical and stylistic lapses. And far too much yuppified jargon pollutes these pages, including phrases I doubt Bitton and Arrington employ in informal discourse, let alone in scholarly exposition. They are, for example, "up front" in their acknowledgments; they point out that Orson Whitney was a "people person," that B. H. Roberts in a period of youthful dissolution almost went "down the tube" as a Church member, and that Bitton's *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies* gives the "nitty-gritty" of Mormon history. One is thus surprised that the final chapter contains no "bottom line" on Mormon historiography. Such expressions, even when placed within quotation marks, do little credit to the literary excellence previously established by these scholars.

Humanity or Divinity?

The Last Temptation of Christ, a film by Martin Scorsese, produced by Universal Studios, 1988, and based on a novel of the same name by Nikos Kazantzakis (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960).

Reviewed by George D. Smith, president, Signature Books, and Camilla Miner Smith, freelance writer.

OUTSIDE THE SAN FRANCISCO THEATER where we saw *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Christians paraded with guitars, bullhorns, sandwich boards, and placards (some in Cantonese) protesting the blasphemous portrayal of their Lord and Savior. Anti-semitic signs accused Lew Wasserman, the Jewish chairman of MCA (parent company of Universal Studios), of perse-

cuting Jesus. One Baptist minister labeled the film as filthy and ugly, predicting that it would bring God's fiery judgment down upon America. Among those defending the filmmaker and the First Amendment rights of theaters and viewers to choose what movies to see, were men dressed as nuns identified as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, marching with signs that read "Thou shalt not censor."

Inside the theater, the tone was more subdued. Having our bags checked by police at the door somehow gave us a sense of having entered an important place. At least there was a quiet anticipation that seemed reverential. We were curious to see what had upset so many people (though we realized that many of the protesters had not even seen the film).