

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).

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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).

The film began with a disclaimer that it was based upon the fictional writing of Nikos Kazantzakis and not upon the Gospels, themselves written many years after the events they describe.

When Jesus, played by Willem Dafoe, comes on the screen, he is unsure of his identity. As a carpenter, he builds crosses for the Romans on which his fellow countrymen are crucified. His friend Judas Iscariot criticizes Jesus' acceptance of the Roman occupation. Jesus answers that he is angry at the injustices but that when he begins to speak words of anger, he inexplicably ends up speaking words of love. Jesus is also troubled by voices. His mother suggests that he have them exorcised if they are of the devil, and he replies that they may be exorcised if they are of the devil. But, what if they are from God? Can one exorcise God?

In the Kazantzakis novel, these voices resulted in a seizure, and caused Jesus to break his betrothal to Mary Magdalene (played by Barbara Hershey in the film), shaming her in such a public way that she became a prostitute. Though the situation is not clearly drawn, the film picks up this story as Jesus visits a house of prostitution, wishing to speak to Mary Magdalene and ask her forgiveness. This is one of the scenes that had offended the fundamentalist critics outside the theater as we and Jesus watch Mary in the brothel. Jesus is waiting to be alone with her and apologize, an apology she rejects.

The movie is good at showing Christ's uncertainty and anguish, but it fails to show him as a charismatic leader and teacher. Since the story is not taken directly from the Gospels, the film portrays Jesus as a man of his times, not someone who would attract a devoted following, not someone sure of his mission.

What really seems to test the forbearance of the crowd outside the theater is the dreamlike temptation Jesus experiences while on the cross. Christ's last temptation is an enticement to live a normal life. While dying on the cross he alone sees a

small girl who invites him off the cross and explains that he no longer has to go through the extraordinary agony, suffering for the accumulated sins of the world. He is free. She leads him from the executions on Golgotha toward a wooded area. A wedding party appears and Jesus asks, "Who's getting married?" The young companion replies, "You are, Jesus." We see Mary Magdalene, beautiful in white. Jesus embraces her; we see her pregnant with Jesus' child. However, she dies in childbirth, and Jesus takes Mary and Martha to wife. As the young female guide tells him, all women are one, only different faces.

Jesus ages before us, fulfilled, with a happy family of children. Then, as he lies dying, he meets Saul of Tarsus who tells him that he is not the real Jesus. The real Jesus died on the cross and gave justification to Paul's Christian evangelism. At this point, Jesus recognizes his greater role and, in an act of free will, chooses crucifixion. As he returns to the cross, we learn that the young guide is really Satan presenting one last spellbinding temptation for Jesus to overcome. Since Jesus does not succumb, we may understand that Jesus is "one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet [is] without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

It is this temptation of sensual love, marriage, and children that causes us to see the truly human side of Jesus. And it seems to be this demonstration of humanity that offends the protestors. Perhaps we are more comfortable thinking of Jesus as divine, above temptation. It was this instinct that led to the third century heresy, called Docetism, which held that Jesus was not really human, but only appeared to be. The orthodox Christian doctrine of incarnation, eventually set down in the fifth century at the Council of Chalcedon, defined Jesus as having both humanity and divinity within his nature.

If there was an anticipation of lust and scandal at the beginning of the film, the end left us with reverential understanding. Martin Scorsese seems a very religious man who has presented the human side of

Christ with the uncertainty and anguish that is part of being human. This is a

Christ humans can relate to, one who understands mortality.

## BRIEF NOTICES

*The True Believers* by Alyce S. Rohrer (Port Washington, N.Y.: Ashley Books, Inc., 1987), 454 pp., bibl., \$18.95.

THIS BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL traces the life of Henry Lunt from his conversion to Mormonism in England in 1850 to exile in the Mexican colonies in the 1890s. Carefully researched from Lunt's journals and letters, family histories, and public records, the story tells of Lunt's conversion, travel to Utah, missions in southern Utah and England, years as bishop in Cedar City, and his plural marriages. An introductory section summarizes the history of Mormonism, and an annotated bibliography lists works on related topics.

The practice of polygamy is a central focus in the novel, particularly from the wives' point of view. The difficulties of the practice on a personal level, and its challenges to the faith of those who lived it, provide conflict throughout the novel. After the Manifesto Lunt's faith led him to live the last years of his life in the Mormon colonies in Mexico, where plural marriages continued for a time. Lunt's own difficult last years, as told here, reflect the hesitant end of Mormon plural marriage.

*The Writings of Camilla Eyring Kimball*, edited by Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), xvii, 157 pp., \$10.95.

CAMILLA EYRING KIMBALL served as a refreshingly candid and outspoken role model for Mormon women during a time of upheaval in expectations and roles of women during the 70s and 80s. And yet, as her son Edward observes in his introduction, "no

one would be more surprised at the appearance of a book containing her words than Camilla Kimball" (ix).

But for many women it was her unpretentious ordinariness that made Sister Kimball more influential than she might have been in her otherwise glamorous position as the prophet's companion: "I know something of losing one's parents, of seeing one's spouse racked with stress and pain, of having one's savings of many years wiped out by theft or bank failure, of watching loved ones stray from the gospel, of having a child stricken with crippling illness, and of feeling disabling old age creeping on" (p. 27). She boldly revealed her own doubts and independence from her husband: "I am a bit more restless than my husband. He has always been solid and unquestioning in his faith, and he has never been able to understand why I have to question and delve" (p. 109). Sister Kimball upheld the traditional values of family and Church with untraditional style. She championed the challenging "profession" of homemaking and warned that "rather than directing both marriage partners away from the home, we need to encourage both to make strengthening the family their primary concern" (p. 10). Her writing is always full of gently persuasive common sense rather than intimidating authority.

Sister Kimball has been an influential, effective spokesperson for women. Her example was influential because of her position as "first lady" to the Church. Her voice was and continues to be effective because it is one of the few official voices that is personal, reasonable, candid, direct yet nonjudgmental — and female.