

wished-for resolutions of struggles with authority, but rather uses them as psychobiography, revealing a relatively ordinary man, likeable enough, struggling with the immense problems of the first half of this century: poverty, insecurity, economic depression, powerlessness, rootlessness, and poor education. In this environment, the new religion flourished. Baer describes theology, practical philosophy, and everyday thinking of the Levites, some rooted in Mormonism, some about the second coming, and some about Jesus as a savior.

Baer's volume makes apparent the threefold dilemma currently facing Mormon scholars. First, thanks to the historical community, we know much about nineteenth-century Mormonism, but information is more scarce about the twentieth, particularly about the central Church in Salt Lake City and the people and communities practicing plural marriage. Second, anthropologists like Baer carry on where historians must leave their task. We look at the small, living communities, but we have not gotten inside the bureaucratic culture nor into the communities practicing plural marriage. This is not for lack of effort, but lack of access. Third, because historians do not study the present directly and anthropologists are

not privy to the very powerful or the very private among the living, we are left to study Mormonism indirectly by looking at its past or its living margins. Supposedly we can see the center, our real concern, by reflection or inference. Supposedly also, particularly for social scientists, Mormonism is itself a way to see United States society more clearly. This is in fact the oldest rationale for studying Mormonism.

The threefold dilemma we see reflected in Baer's volume is the failure of historians and anthropologists to see into and analyze the core of the Church. Modern living Mormonism is fully American; it is not a vision of where America will be. It is America. Neither historians nor anthropologists have yet dealt with this. Furthermore, the tools we are now using to study Mormonism may not be the best for describing the internal workings of late twentieth-century phenomena. Rather, the tools for seeing our society are powerful and dangerous and largely untried in Mormon scholarship: psychoanalysis, the various Marxisms, critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and interpretivist theory in literary criticism. Baer tries some of these; other scholars are trying others. But, it seems to me, these are the very tools that can help us address our dilemma and learn to know ourselves.

New Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century St. George

A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah by Larry M. Logue (Champaign, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1988), 165 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Allan Kent Powell, historian for the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

A SERMON IN THE DESERT should be taken seriously by those interested in early St. George and in the workings of polygamy and family life in a small nineteenth-century Utah community. It offers to local history students and writers of new methods a look at issues and an alternative to the traditional chronological or topical narrative approach to community studies.

Larry Logue argues that community studies can improve theory making by generating new theories and effectively applying older theories within the manageable scope of a community framework. In using his study of St. George to examine theories about past American life and the Latter-day Saints, Logue sets out to look at five issues: (1) parents' roles in marriage making; (2) the marginality of plural marriage; (3) the role of theology in the lives of St. George residents; (4) the relationship between theology and family behavior; and (5) the tension between nineteenth-century American culture and the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint anti-American separatism. Included in all of these issues is "the central project . . . to explain as fully as possible the people who lived for a time in southwestern Utah and produced records that we can examine" (xi).

Logue sets for himself a monumental, perhaps impossible, undertaking, and it is understandable why in a book of less than 120 pages of text and appendices he is not able to provide a thorough examination of the stated issues. In the attempt, however, he does extend Mormon scholarship a significant distance. His chapter two, "Mormonism and the Worldview," is alone worth the price of the book. Here Logue explores the relationship between official and popular religion. The brief sketches of official pronouncements and individual beliefs about such issues as sin, the devil, death, the spirit world, resurrection, relationship to God, trials and suffering, contact with non-Mormons, persecutions, and attitudes on public and private family life indicate that "the people of St. George applying their free will to their beliefs as well as to their actions, made their worldview a mosaic of official doctrine and popular emendations. Residents accepted the church's familial model for social relations, but they saved space for individual

action and resisted when the church encroached on that space" (p. 35).

With this interesting introduction to belief and behavior, the rest of the book concentrates on polygamy and family life in St. George. Perhaps most readers will be attracted to the book for its treatment of the perennially popular subject. They will not be disappointed. Logue's conclusions about polygamy and family life in Utah's Dixie, especially compared with other contemporary areas in England, Italy, and Belgium, shed meaningful light on nineteenth-century life.

Instead of relying on traditional census schedules to determine the extent of polygamy, Logue extends his data set to family group sheets and published genealogies, thereby identifying 446 marriages and 2,405 individuals in St. George before the 1880 census. Logue's methodology, explained in detail (in Appendix B), will interest those applying similar demographic methodologies and demonstrates the author's thoroughness in constructing his data set. Those deeply interested will want to compare Logue's methodology with that of geographer Lowell "Ben" Bennion, whose 1984 *Journal of Mormon History* article, "The Incidence of Mormon Polygamy in 1880: 'Dixie' Versus Davis Stake," reaches essentially the same conclusion as this study about the rate of polygamy in St. George using spatial rather than the period analysis. Logue proposes that polygamy in St. George was much more common than previously supposed. Though 14 percent of St. George families were probably not eligible to participate in polygamy because of their relative inactivity in the Church, still "almost two-fifths of all husbands' time, nearly three-quarters of all woman years, and well over half of all child-years were spent