

in polygamy before 1880" (p. 63)

An unexpected discovery is that, for St. George at least, plural marriages had about the same total fertility rate as monogamous marriages. While Church members may have differed with Church authorities on some points, large families were agreed both in official pronouncements and public practice. "Fertile marriages met the duty of Mormons to embody spirits waiting for their mortal experience and at the same time accumulate treasure for their parents' own after life, since heavenly exaltation depended in part on a large progeny" (p. 87).

Perhaps the most original contribution of *A Sermon in the Desert* is its examination of mortality. Children suffered a significantly high mortality rate, with just over 70 percent living to age five. The most dangerous time for children was after the first year, when they were weaned from breast milk. In contrast, the death rate for men was much closer to twentieth-century standards. The author suggests several factors that account for this: the St. George climate hindered infectious diseases in adults; adherence to the Word of Wisdom seemed to produce better health and fewer fatal accidents; and women, in time of food shortages, saw that their husbands were fed even if they had to do without. Women suffered a much higher death rate than men, one-

fourth of the deaths occurring in childbirth. Tuberculosis and malaria also claimed a greater number of women than men. Still, if women were more susceptible to death than men, they were only part of a worldwide pattern. They did not see themselves as victims; in their Mormon view, they were sacrificing for the kingdom and would gain a just reward.

*A Sermon in the Desert* is an analytical history based on careful study of nineteenth-century diaries and journals. It is also one of the first book-length attempts to apply current quantification methods to the study of the Mormon past. Readers who expect the book to read like the familiar accounts of Utah's Dixie by Nels Anderson, A. Karl Larson, and Juanita Brooks will be surprised by its unique style. But though Logue may not have the narrative style of the past generation of historians, he writes with respect, admiration, and clarity. We are fortunate that this pioneering examination of a Mormon community using quantification methods, in contrast to so many other attempts at quantification history, is done so well. Larry Logue has written a book that should excite the professional history community, yet that may be enjoyed by the lay community as well. Such a feat, especially where quantification methodologies are applied, is an all too rare accomplishment in today's world of historical scholarship.

## Passion Poems

*How Much for the Earth?* by Emma Lou Thayne (Salt Lake City: Utahns United Against the Nuclear Arms Race, 1989), 24 pp.

Reviewed by Linda Sillitoe, a writer and journalist living in Salt Lake City, whose latest book, *Windows on the Sea and Other Short Stories*, was published by Signature Books in 1989.

ONE MIGHT SUSPECT that a book of poems published by Utahns United Against the Nuclear Arms Race might possess as interesting a history as the poems that comprise it. *How Much for the Earth?* by Emma Lou Thayne entered its third printing in English in 1989 with translations already available in German and Russian. Proceeds from this printing and from a

Kiev, USSR, publisher go into separate funds for peace.

This volume, carried in the hand of its Utah-born, Mormon author, opened doors as no visa can during her recent visit to the Soviet Union. There poets are read by the people, not only by the literatae. Passion and even propaganda have their place, for poems and poets speak for the times, as happened here during the Vietnam War and, with less recognition, during the women's movement.

In this "Suite of Poems: About Time for Considering," Thayne is as accessible and intimate as readers of her earlier collections might expect. For the first time, she is as overtly political as overtly personal. This slim volume traces her own journey from a high school physics class, through the nuclear victory of World War II, to a realization of the mushroom-shaped shroud that overhangs our planet. In one poem we witness the birth of a grandchild and in another meet a visitor to Dachau, indelibly etched on our memories:

He stares without motion  
involved as a lover  
awaiting a lover in a crowd. Like  
a camera his gaze inches

from end to end of the barracks,  
returns, returns  
to the door. It is more than a  
memorial he is attending.  
The building keeps everything; it  
remembers.  
He listens to its voice with a look  
of such sadness  
I want to touch it away. Who  
might have known I could be  
so held by what passes between a  
stranger and the years,  
him searching for a day and finding it?

In this collection, Thayne's poetic voice entices us as storyteller, prophet, cajoler, and exhorter. Form, image, and statement merge and meld with scarcely a seam. Here, too, even writing the possibility of ultimate destruction, she celebrates life with the vibrancy of her other works:

Smell of soap, hot animal. An  
apple crisp. A ball hit,  
Tongue of a lover, dream of a dead  
mother stroking our cheek.

These poems remind us that the personal and the political are inextricably intertwined; that none of us can sit out the dance of life and expect it to indefinitely continue.

## Hearkening unto Other Voices

*To Be Learned Is Good If . . .* edited by Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 242 pp., \$11.95.

Reviewed by Robert J. Woolley, a physician in St. Paul, Minnesota.

WHEN I FIRST picked up a copy of *To Be Learned Is Good If . . .* I assumed that the implied remainder of the title would be a continuation of Jacob's famous statement

about hearkening unto the voice of God. Having read the book, though, I now believe that some of the twelve authors would prefer to append the words . . . *If They Hearken unto Our Way of Thinking.*

This collection of essays addressing "controversial religious questions" bristles with intolerance of diverse views of scripture, faith, and history. We are told that Christians outside of Mormonism are "seal[ed] from any meaningful understand-