

of Utah polygamy (such as the 2002 jailing of Tom Green, husband of five wives) and facts about the ongoing prostitution problem in contemporary Salt Lake City.

In conclusion, Nichols has provided a fresh, revealing overview of two topics in Salt Lake City's history that often have been considered, if not taboo, then generally too delicate for

close, honest inspection. His study treats polygamy and prostitution issues with honesty, sensitivity, and a professional historian's eye for detail and documentation. For anyone interested in either women's issues or the lesser-known realities of Salt Lake City's early growing pains, this book is a fascinating read.

## Navigating the Difficult Terrain of the Mormon Experience

*Studies in Mormon History, 1830-1897* by James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 1152 pp.; and *Mormon History* by Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 279 pp.

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For the last several years I have had the opportunity to serve on the Mormon History Association's book awards committee. That assignment—in addition to my day job as Curator of Special Collections at Weber State University—keeps me well aware of developments in the Mormon publishing world. Over the last few years, a number of important and well-written studies of the Mormon past have emerged. Some scholars are looking at issues which have long been of interest, others are turning their attention to new areas of study. All of this suggests to me that the future of Mormon historical study continues to be impressive.

Assessing the future, however, is always predicated on an understanding of the past. In this regard, two important and useful books are now available for scholars of the Mormon experience. They are *Studies in Mormon History: An Indexed Bibliography* and *Mormon History*. Both volumes are published by the University of Illinois Press, and both represent the work of three of Mormon history's finest, and most prolific, scholars—James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker.

The origins of *Studies in Mormon History* date from the mid-1980s when the editors recognized the need for a comprehensive, indexed bibliography of Mormon historical materials. This is a daunting task, and the authors admit to being "older and wiser" after their "single-minded and dogged" task of compiling all "books, articles, master's theses, and Ph.D. dissertations" dealing with the history of the church (p. ix). The results are impressive. The editors (along with their colleagues Armand Mauss and Dynette Ivie Reynolds whose bibliographical contributions to both volumes on social science literature are impressive) have compiled annotations of some 15,000 books, articles, theses, dissertations and other sources.

The book itself is divided into two parts; an alphabetical listing, and an index to historical writings, which is organized by subject and author. Each section presented unique challenges. In the first section the editors struggled with what to include and what not to include, both in terms of author, subject and publisher, and how to differentiate between Mormon history and Utah history which, as they note "are often intertwined." They concluded their desire was to focus on "serious scholarship," those works which "might be best described as honest efforts at responsible, non-polemical writing" (p. x). In the second section, the editors faced a somewhat different challenge of devising a user friendly system of indexing while avoiding an index that was so minutely cross-referenced as to make it unwieldy. Their selection of more than 6500 subject terms seems to have reached that challenging balance. And it seems to have worked. I was in a Mormon specialty bookstore recently, and a question about what had been written on a particular topic led the staff to a survey of this compilation and a lively discussion of the pros and cons of the various articles and books on the subject.

As the authors admit, "the aim of a comprehensive listing of secondary historical literature on Mormon history. . . can only be proximate," and despite diligent searching some important titles have been missed. This, they assert, is one of the "major frustrations" facing any bibliographer (p. xi). At the same time, technological advances may well see future compilations of this nature online as opposed to between covers. Still, this volume, along with previous bibliographic works which they recognize and credit, is an indispensable reference

source for any serious scholar of the Mormon story. Indeed, its size alone constitutes a graphic testament to the extent of Mormon scholarly study.

If *Studies in Mormon History* is an indispensable reference source, *Mormon History* is an indispensable narrative assessment of the state of Mormon historiography past, present, and future. When the editors began their work on this second volume they wanted it to be useful as a companion to *Studies*, and yet a descriptive and interpretative volume standing on its own. They envisioned a handbook that would aid readers "by describing what has gone on in the past, including the various methods, themes, and interpretations that historians have used; by sketching the background and work of leading LDS writers; and by suggesting the pitfalls and strengths of previous writing" (p. ix).

The book is divided into several parts. The first three chapters trace the growth and development of Mormon historiography. Chapter one deals with the nineteenth century, chapter two with the first fifty years of the twentieth century, and chapter three traces the post war era and the rise of a "New Mormon History." A fourth chapter skillfully examines the "Challenge of Mormon Biography." Chapter five, "Flowers, Weeds and Thistles," by Armand L. Mauss is an excellent overview of the growing body of social science literature on Mormon-related topics. In addition, two appendices examine a variety of topics including Mormon imprints, reference works and encyclopedias, bibliographies, and manuscript sources. These will have particular value for scholars but are useful to the general reader as well.

In chapter one, the editors trace the earliest days of Mormon historical

study. Much of the writing in this period was written by participants in contemporary events, and there was little room for neutrality. While this time period was dominated by two groups of historians, "LDS writers of providential history and their non-Mormon antagonists," the editors recognize that these historical accounts, not unlike Mormonism itself, "traveled a great distance" during this period (pp. 2, 21). The roots of Mormon study began in the millennial excitement and polemics of the early days, but over time matured in style, accuracy and use of sources. By the turn of the new century, while "historians typically remained in two opposing camps," Mormon historiography itself was in the "process of becoming" (p. 22).

As Walker, Whittaker, and Allen point out, the new century saw both Mormonism and Mormon historiography, while still enmeshed in this process of becoming, also entering into a period of rapid change. Even though old patterns persisted, these years saw the beginnings of a more responsible study of Mormonism. A number of historians from within the fold emerged—B. H. Roberts, particularly—who drew on some distance, as well as increasing primary and secondary sources, to produce better studies. At the same time, a number of academically trained scholars, both Mormon and non-Mormon, came to realize that "Mormonism could be studied for its own sake" (p. 39). Many of these Mormon scholars are known and read even today. These include E. E. Ericksen, Nels Anderson, Lowry Nelson, and others.

Ironically, while this was taking place, the "three leading historians of Mormonism at midcentury"—Fawn Brodie, Dale Morgan, and Juanita

Brooks—were not professionally trained historians. Still these writers were very much part of a "new historical culture" which featured confronting difficult questions, indeed asking new questions, while seeking to avoid polemics in favor of balance. To what degree they succeeded is obviously debatable. But clearly these developments, encouraged in turn by "new publishing outlets, and. . . more educated. . . readers," set the stage for the most productive period in Mormon historiography (p. 51).

While better known to most of us, the historical writing of the last fifty years is in some ways harder to summarize. Clearly many of the patterns of the first fifty years of the twentieth century were replicated in the second half, though what emerged is clearly a "New Mormon History." The trend toward professionalism and professional training, the growing numbers of outlets for studies, and the desire to ask tough questions continued and expanded. Several individuals took a leading and mentoring role: S. George Ellsworth, Eugene Campbell, and Leonard Arrington would dominate the historiography of the 1950s and 60s. They would set a pattern for newer scholars to follow. While students of Mormon history are aware of the important role of Ellsworth and Campbell along with many others, Arrington clearly emerged as the leading figure of the era. Not only were his studies seminal—especially *Great Basin Kingdom*—but his leadership in the Mormon History Association and the Church Historical Division would bring new historians to the task, produce a wide range of in-house studies and published works, and set a pattern for a new generation of scholars to emulate. The last quarter of the past century saw these patterns intensify while

simultaneously a new challenge to objective scholarship would develop among the church hierarchy. Like the proverbial genie let out of the bottle, however, the published output of Mormon history in those years—written by Mormons and non-Mormons across a wide spectrum—would prove difficult to contain. It constitutes a major intellectual legacy. Indeed the very number of scholars of the Mormon experience is impressive, and it is difficult to make a list without leaving out important writers and their works. At the beginning of the third century of Mormon historiography, the editors realize that “the process of becoming” is still very much alive (p. 96). Clearly, Walker, Whittaker, and Allen have chronicled those developments, outlined the tensions, and summarized the important writers and writings of the last fifty years with skill and insight.

Having said all of this, I am not without some criticism of the editors' assessments. Perhaps not surprisingly, they revolve around issues related to the New Mormon History. I recognize that in many ways it is not easy to objectively chronicle a time period in which one was also a participant. Still, let me list a few of my concerns.

First, I found the discussion of the creation and eventual outcome of the sixteen volume sesquicentennial history somewhat understated. Perhaps that is understandable in light of the editors' involvement in this project, and/or their place of employment. Still, because of the ramifications of this event in Mormon historiography, one might have assumed a more prominent and detailed discussion. As an archivist at the Church Historical Department during this period, I well remember the sense of pride and anticipation surrounding this projected se-

ries. As the editors note, the project fell into disfavor and was “cancelled” (p. 68). But their summary is clearly a whimper not a bang. While the editors recognize and cite historical studies which deal with this period, since *Mormon History* is a study of Mormon historiography, one would have wished for a bit more commentary and analysis. Which of the sixteen volumes were eventually published? Which were not? Where were those books published? What is the long-range impact of the decision to abandon the project on the scope of Mormon historiography? How would our historical understanding of the Mormon past be different if those additional volumes were available? These are all questions worth asking.

Second, I disagree with the editors' characterization of Signature Books. The company is described as “owned by George D. Smith, an LDS liberal activist who published material largely in his ideological image” (p. 91). Really? I think they are wrong in their assessment not only of Smith personally and his role in the internal editorial process itself, but also of the nature of Signature Books' list generally, or even only its historical titles. Of course, truth in disclosure would have me admit that I am a member of Signature's editorial advisory committee. At the same time, the authors describe Deseret Book as being at the “other end of the spectrum”: its “best historical works were documentary collections, a printing category that minimized controversy” (p. 91). True enough, but could one fairly accuse that press of publishing materials largely in the “ideological image” of Gordon B. Hinckley? I am not sure what each of these characterizations really adds to our understanding of Mormon publishing. Moreover, when you compare

the treatment of these publishers with their discussion of the University of Illinois Press, which features quotations from editors and internal documents, one cannot help finding their assessment almost parenthetical. (Perhaps a bit of true disclosure on their part might also be in order.) Every press has its mission and audience, every press has a broader list than one might imagine, and over-personalization is always problematic.

Finally, I find their discussion of D. Michael Quinn problematic as well. Quinn is listed as one of three representative "institutional outsiders" among Mormon historians (the others are Lawrence Foster and Richard L. Bushman), not employed by either the LDS or RLDS churches (p. 77). Of course such a categorization of Quinn is truer now than when he was employed by the Church Historical Department or by BYU. While arguing such individuals demonstrate diversity, the book has a particular edge in describing Quinn that seems at once unique and dismissive. Quinn is an "excommunicate," for example, while Foster combines "an outsider's critical judgment with an insider's sympathy," and Bushman is a "prize winning historian" who while "traditional and conservative" explores difficult questions (pp. 84-86). Quinn is said to be "drawn to controversy" and his scholarly work is described as reflecting his personal interests, lacking a unifying thesis or method, and featuring "con-

clusions [that] at times overreached his evidence." Moreover, while noting that Quinn suggested his works were not "influenced by any theoretical model," the editors assess his work as featuring "an unconscious sharing of his cultural environment" while seeking to create "a new view of the Mormon past" (p. 86). I am not particularly convinced by their argument that Quinn's scholarship is especially reflective of the influence of the post-modern critics they cite. In fairness, the editors do praise Quinn's *Same-Sex Dynamics*, as "an important book, probably Quinn's best to date," which examined "Mormonism's wider American context, had new information and views, and treated a topic that was once taboo" (p. 86). Finally, I find it somewhat ironic, considering the authors' discussion of publishers, that it was the University of Illinois Press that published Quinn's book. What influenced that decision: promoting a particular "ideological image" or simply a commitment to expanding the dialogue?

These criticisms aside, I have nothing but the highest admiration for the editors of these two volumes. They are among the best observers of the Mormon scene, and their body of work—including these two fine volumes—will stand the test of time. Both *Studies in Mormon History* and *Mormon History* are essential sources for anyone intent on navigating the difficult terrain of the Mormon experience.