

NEWS AND

UPDATE

BYU Racial Play

Again the question of interracial couples in theatrical productions has been raised. Like last year's episode at Promised Valley Playhouse with Carol Lynn Pearson's *The Dance* (see *Sunstone*, 10:9), a BYU coed was recently denied a role in the student production of *West Side Story* because she was black.

Michelle Harris, an undergraduate and dancer from Allentown, PA, was not given the role for which she auditioned because the part would require her to dance with a white man. The play implies that the couple is involved in a physical relationship. "Community members might have been upset at the implications," said the student director who denied Harris the role.

Faculty members and administrators at BYU did not agree with the student director's action, saying that it went counter to the Church's anti-discrimination policies. The director was then admonished to make an effort at recompense, which she did by offering Harris the position of assistant to the director—a non-performing position—which Harris declined.

Harris is one of perhaps twenty black students among the 27,000 students at BYU. T.R. Reid, a reporter for the *Washington Post* quotes Harris as saying, "When I came out here from Allentown, I looked around and said, 'Hey, isn't there anybody black here?' Somebody told me there are some blacks in Salt Lake City, but I guess I

haven't been up there on the right days." The BYU-Harris situation is seen by some as evidence that despite the 1978 revelation allowing blacks an equal standing in the church, the acceptance of blacks into the Mormon culture has not changed much since a 1960's pamphlet called "Civil Rights—Tool of Communist Deception," written by Ezra Taft Benson and subsequently published by the Church. There are some BYU students who have openly criticized Harris for going public with her story; they feel it shows the University and the Church in a somewhat less-than-perfect perspective. An editorial in *BYU's Daily Universe* insisted that the whole matter is indicative of "an inherent public relations problem at BYU rather than a problem with discrimination." Regardless of interpretation, Michelle Harris will not be appearing in *West Side Story* at Brigham Young University.

Temple Open House Boycotted in Denver

Yet another controversy is brewing in Denver over the LDS temple. In March, both local papers, the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*, reported the conflict. Evidently, a group of thirteen Protestant and Catholic clergymen circulated a letter to approximately 400 other ministers, asking them to decline invitations to participate in an open house for the Mormon church's new temple in Arapahoe County.

The letter says that Mormons are not Christian because "Their Jesus is but one of many gods." The letter goes on to refer to the endowment,

a temple ritual. Terry Mattingly of *Rocky Mountain News* reported that "The letter does not contain quotations from the ritual, but says traditional Christian clergy are 'mocked and ridiculed.'" The Rev. Henry F. Fingerlin of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church called the ritual "an attack on all Christian clergy." Fingerlin was the driving force behind the boycott letter; the letter is written on his church's letterhead. He was aided in his efforts by Ex-Mormons for Jesus.

Elder Alfred L. Draney, Denver-area representative for the LDS church did not retract the invitation

to the clergy. The *Denver Post* quotes him as saying, "We're interested in showing the edifice to our friends. We're just not in any mood to get into a quarrel over it."

Fingerlin stands by the boycott letter. He believes that any attempt to participate in the temple's open house would be seen as a public endorsement of Mormon doctrine. The Rev. Jack Van Ens of Arvada Presbyterian Church was a recipient of Fingerlin's letter. Van Ens felt the tone of the letter was too harsh, but maintained (according to the *News* story) that "If traditional Christians refuse to stand up and draw the line between what we believe and what Mormons believe, then we will lose our integrity."

No date for the temple's open house has yet been set, except to say that it will take place sometime this coming summer.

REVIEWS

Subliminal Ads

Utah state legislators have always taken seriously their duty to protect Utahans from the messages of worldly society, including liquor ads, cable television, and the covers of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. But when they begin trying to protect their constituents from messages they may never even have noticed, even the *Wall Street Journal* takes note.

A statewide ban on subliminal advertising being advocated by Terry Jessop, a Provo management consultant and ballroom-dancing instructor, was the subject of a recent story in the *WSJ*. Mr. Jessop is also director of the

National Institute for Subliminal Research, which he says has more than 500 members nationwide. Jessop feels the problem of subliminal messages has not received the attention it deserves. "The average citizen is exposed three to five times a week to various forms of subliminal advertising," he charges. "That is significant exposure that merits a look at this kind of legislation."

Charges that advertisers embed hidden messages in their ads have been made since the 1950s, but advertisers seldom take the claim seriously. Utah Advertising Council lobbyist Dale Zabriskie shows

investigators a poster-sized blowup of ice cubes from a liquor ad that Mr. Jessop claims conceal subliminal messages. The poster's text agrees that subliminal messages may indeed be found. It also says that if you look hard enough, "you might find a portrait of Millard Fillmore, a stuffed pork chop and a 1947 Dodge."

Still, Utah is not alone in taking a hard look at possible subliminal messages. Similar legislation is being proposed in California, Idaho, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The Utah bill is being sponsored by State Representative Frances Merrill, who believes that subliminal messages must be controlled. "I don't want anything going into my mind," she says, "that I'm not aware of."

Are There Entrepreneurs in SLC?

In an ironic break with history Utah businesses have begun purposely seeking non-Mormons to fill management positions. According to an article in the January 1986 issue of *Inc.* magazine, by Greg Critser, "The insular Mormon culture that brought economic growth in years past is now a liability for many 1980s business owners."

Critser cites two major reasons for this search for non-Mormons to fill jobs along the Wasatch Front. First, the Mormon culture's philosophy of cooperatively working together runs counter to the philosophy of entrepreneurship, which reeks of individual, innovative thought. Mormons, in general, are most successful in corporate set-

tings where the dynamics are hierarchical and already established, but seem to flounder if expected to think in ways that differ from standard business procedure. Critser quotes James Clayton, dean of the University of Utah's graduate school, as saying "Utah may be a good place to have a lot of docile workers, but it's not a place that encourages going against the grain, which is the essence of entrepreneurship."

Secondly, Critser acknowledges a shortage of capital within Utah and the Mormon culture. The high cost of raising large families, plus the added financial expense of paying 10% of the family's income to the Mormon church result in eliminating any money that might be

saved for investing in new business ideas. In short, investment capital is not easily found in Utah, forcing businesses to look elsewhere for economic development. Critser is not shy to point out that "When Utahans do become creative with their capital, the result has often been disastrous." He is, of course, referring to such things as penny stock frauds, real estate frauds, and other investment scams which resulted in about 10,000 investors losing an estimated \$200 million, between 1980 and 1983. However, when Mormon businesses seek out non-Mormons for Utah jobs, there is a definite problem in terms of culture. Not many non-Mormons feel comfortable entering the predominantly Mormon culture which Utah has to offer. Unfortunately for Utahans who would like to find work in Utah—Mormon or non-Mormon—some businesses simply find the climate more conducive to business success elsewhere.

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The House That Gordon Built

Mormons rarely grace the slick pages of *People* magazine; it takes a certain kind of person to accomplish that kind of feat. In the January 20, 1986 issue, Gordon Hall pulled it off. He was the subject of a three page profile, two pages of which were covered by photographs of his home.

Gordon Hall is a 32-year-old Mormon who lives in Paradise Valley, Arizona with his second wife. He is the owner of MGM, a real estate company. He is also a multi-millionaire who seriously and freely admits to having the desire to become a trillionaire.

As evidence of Gordon Hall's wealth and ambition, one need only take note of his home—a 90 room mansion, built on six acres of prime land just outside Phoenix. The specifics: tennis court, racquetball court, exercise room, 14 car garage (with gas station), 16 bedrooms, 25 baths (the master bath contains a Jacuzzi for fourteen), six dining rooms, six kitchens, outdoor swimming pool, waterfall, and an ice rink. And, of course, there are almost fifty surveillance cameras to keep an eye on the premises. The house itself measures up to 52,800 square feet.

There is no cherry on top, but there is a 44-foot-wide sign on the roof of the mansion which makes a simple statement, "Gordon Hall Mansion." Hall told *People* magazine that, "I want people to know who lives here."

The house was purchased for \$2 million from Walker McCune, an Arizona investor. Hall—who laid the foundation for his fortune by building a successful health club chain called 24 Hour Nautilus—spent another \$1 million on the tennis and racquetball courts and

the workout room

Hall didn't just find all this money out in the desert. He grew up in a tract house in San Diego, worked as a fisherman, joined the Army, then worked his way up the management ladder in a health club in Colorado Springs. Hall is quoted in *People* magazine as saying, "Being successful is not so difficult as people say."

Gordon Hall is interested in doing things big. Indeed, his business is big. His real estate company is planning to give Phoenix the biggest mall in the world, as well as the tallest building in the state. And in West Germany, Gordon Hall wants to build the biggest mall in all of Europe. "So I say to myself (he is quoted in *People*), 'The biggest and the best.' That's what I'm here to do."

New Offshoot of LDS Church Springs Up

On February 8, 1986 three people representing The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ spoke about their organization to a small audience at the Salt Lake Public Library. The Restoration church was established less than a year ago in Los Angeles by a group of people who had been excommunicated from the LDS Church for

homosexuality. The group is called by some onlookers "The Gay Mormon Church."

The "Temporary Presidency" of the new denomination is headed by Elder Antonio A. Feliz (Presiding High Priest), who once served as a bishop in the LDS church. Feliz and others felt they had received a

edited by Maurice Draper

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revelation to create the new church. The church was officially organized on August 28, 1985 and has approximately twenty members. Counselors in the presidency are LaMar Hamilton (Presiding Bishop) and John R. Crane (Presiding Patriarch/ Evangelist). Feliz and Crane have collected their revelations in the book *Hidden Treasures and Promises*.

The Restoration church differs from the LDS church in several significant ways. Its membership is dominated by lesbians and gay men. Also, it refuses to declare itself the *only* true church. The Restoration church believes in the ordination of women into its priesthood; Elder Pamela J. Calkins was ordained a minister in the church. An interesting concept in the new

the new church is gay polygamy. *Triangle* magazine quotes Feliz as stating, "If a group of people feels that a plural relationship is confirmed by the Lord and the presidency has no objection, a sealing will be performed."

However, the Restoration church does maintain practices that are similar to the LDS church. They believe in paying tithing, holding Family Home Evening, and in having a lay clergy. The Restoration church plans to implement a missionary program to proselytize gay people. They plan to have temples in which endowments and marriage sealings can be performed. The leaders of this new denomination stress that The Restoration Church of Jesus Christ follows the doctrine presented by the Prophet Joseph

Smith, and those found in the four standard works.

The gay Mormon community itself has not totally embraced the Restoration church. Some members of Affirmation, a support group for Mormon gays and lesbians, oppose the new church because they maintain a belief in the LDS Church. Affirmation and the Restoration church are decidedly separate organizations with completely distinct goals. The Restoration church is not allowed to solicit converts at Affirmation gatherings.

When asked if the LDS Church had made any official statement about the Restoration Church of Jesus Christ, Jerry Cahill—spokesman for the LDS Church—said, "I've never heard of it."

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Bell on Reagan

The most well-known Mormon educator, T. H. Bell, former U.S. Secretary of Education, recently described his relationship with the Great Communicator. In the March issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* magazine, Bell describes Ronald Reagan as "a man of strength, conviction and courage;" however, he also charges that the Administration failed to set forth a clear policy on education.

"I worked in the Cabinet for four long, tumultuous years," writes Bell. "I learned that Ronald Reagan apparently believed he could get the best thinking from his Cabinet and senior staff members if he allowed a few debates and verbal brawls to discipline their thinking."

Bell believes that a lack of decisive leadership at the top gave the Administration's education policy a certain incoherence. One example of this is in the area of bilingual education, a program the Administration initially wanted to sharply curtail. Given this, Bell says he was surprised to hear Reagan promise Texas Hispanics during his 1984

reelection campaign that he would support continued funding for the program.

Reagan's reluctance to step into education policy also gave an opening to right-wing ideologues who, says Bell, would take the President's general ideas and "carry them to the lunatic fringes of ideological political thought." Bell charges these unnamed conservatives with aiming for the abolition of every major federal education program, including student financial aid and aid to the handicapped.

Bell's criticism was particularly startling in light of his reputation as a low-profile administrator who

seldom spoke out on controversial issues during his tenure in the Cabinet. Still, conservative politicians tended to dismiss his criticism. Burton Yale Pines, vice-president of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank in Washington, D.C., dismissed the article as "a rather pathetic exercise" and added, "it was Bell who was out of step with Reagan." Free Congress Foundation president Paul Weyrich was somewhat more blunt, describing the article as "sour grapes from a man now looking for a high-paying post somewhere in the education establishment."

Bell is presently a professor of education at the University of Utah, where he teaches education administration.

Political Shifting

After a long season out in the cold, do Utah liberals have a chance to regain some influence in the state? In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley argue that Utah may be ready for a change in its political

weather.

The co-authors of *Empires in the Sun* and *America's Saints*, Gottlieb and Wiley are familiar with the signs of conservative entrenchment in Utah. The state



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gave Reagan his biggest majorities in the country in the last two elections, and at present every statewide office is held by conservative Republicans. Gottlieb and Wiley also note other factors that limit liberal influence: a small and disorganized minority community, a weak tradition of union political activity, the conservative cultural values of Mormonism, and a long-standing hostility to the federal government. But there are other factors at work. During the past decade, immigration into the Salt Lake Valley has eroded the traditional Mormon majority there. More than half the population of Salt Lake City is now non-Mormon, and Gottlieb and Wiley claim that "in the context of Utah conservatism, Salt Lake City is a veritable hotbed of radical-liberal politics." Salt Lake City mayor Palmer DePaulis and his predecessor Ted Wilson have both deviated from the general run of Utah elected officials. They are both moderate Democrats who present themselves as competent young administrators with innovative approaches to the challenges facing the city.

Gottlieb and Wiley also think that Utah voters may be less interested in ideology than their record at the polls suggests. They point to former governor Scott Matheson as an example of a successful Utah politician, who "avoids ideological conflict by staying 'above' politics and focusing instead on one or two safe issues and the cultivation of a pleasing image." Politicians who stress ideology in their campaigns may be less successful. Recent negative polls have caused Senator Orrin Hatch to soft pedal his commitment to several New Right objectives, particularly in the area of women's issues.

Gottlieb and Wiley conclude by pointing out that ideology is less important in American politics than it is in European countries. Instead, American politicians have chosen to portray their opponents as extremists, while assuring the voters that they share the voters' mainstream values. In Utah the "mainstream" has traditionally thought of itself as conservative, but a cultural shift away from that identification might have only a limited ideological impact.

"The Reagan revolution," the two writers conclude, "is not a permanent one even in Utah, especially when its champion leaves office."

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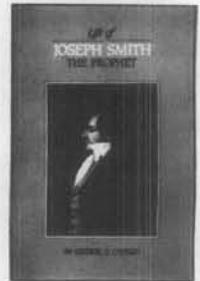
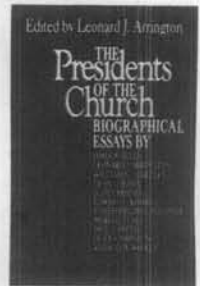
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TABERNACLE

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Reviewed by Scott Abbott

The Mormon murder mystery, of which Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* is the most famous example, had a banner year in 1983. Rex Burns's *The Avenging Angel* (Viking Press), Gary Stewart's *The Tenth Virgin* (St. Martin's Press), and Thomas Cook's *Tabernacle* (Houghton Mifflin) all first appeared in that year. The latter two novels share extensive similarities of plot. In both *The Tenth Virgin* and *Tabernacle*, a street-wise New York detective tracks down a murderer in the very foreign environment of Salt Lake City (with excursions to Provo and southern Utah). Their plots turn on the doctrine of blood atonement; and in each the detective solves the case (which ends with an attempted assassination in the tabernacle during general conference) only by making his way through the labyrinth of Mormon theology, culture, hierarchy, and fringe elements. Both novels make interesting reading, but *Tabernacle* proves more satisfying and more provocative to Mormon readers. (For a further description of *The Tenth Virgin* see Levi Peterson's review in *SUNSTONE* vol. 10 no. 3.)

In *Tabernacle* Tom Jackson, a ten-year veteran of the Salt Lake police department, still wishes he were in his native New York, which he had left after a mysterious event involving his only real friend. As Jackson solves the series of Salt Lake murders he reflects on those earlier events. Thus the reader experiences two stories at once, both of which illuminate the personality of the New York cop cast out of his seamy paradise into the City of the Saints.

With his heart still in New York, Jackson fights periodic attacks of depression: "You feel like a fly in a prayer book. The whole weight of Salt Lake just comes slamming down on you! . . . He did not like the wholesome cleanliness, the other-worldly gleam. But there

were cases of blight here and there, a greasy diner or oil-stained gas station." There are important reasons, however, why Jackson is in Salt Lake rather than in New York, and by the end of the book we find just how attractive the city's "other-worldly gleam" is to the cop whose moral foundation was severely shaken in New York.

A man of Jackson's experience is naturally cynical. When he finds Donald Olsen, a Church spokesman in the public communications department, and BYU student Jennifer Warren in compromising (and deadly) proximity to the crime, he works doggedly against what seems an insane coverup by his fellow policemen and by the powerful Mormon hierarchy.

Because of the pressure on him to conform, he takes himself off the case and then must face the persuasive apostle of the Church, Mordecai McBride. Their conversation reveals both men's attitudes toward the Mormons' partially achieved, strenuously defended utopia. When McBride finds that Jackson left the case because of the perceived coverup, their discussion has overtones of the current debate over the writing of Mormon history:

"Do you honestly think we are that corrupt?" McBride asked, a sense of wounded honor in his tone.

"No."

"You're implying it."

"Look," Tom said, "I know how a murder investigation works. You can't just exclude an entire area of investigation and expect to do the job. You've got to check out everything."

"And you think we won't?"

"There was a girl up there with Donald Olsen. Maybe they knew each other. Maybe they didn't. But in any normal investigation, that's the first thing you'd need to find out."

"Agreed. So?"

"They're not looking in that direction," Tom said.

"I see."

"They don't want for there to be any relationship between the girl and Olsen."

"Maybe there wasn't one," McBride said.

"Maybe there wasn't," Tom said, "But from my experience I've learned that if you don't want to find something, you won't whether it's there or not."

McBride glanced about the room, then leaned forward again. "Does the word discretion mean anything to you, Tom?"

The apostle tells Jackson how important Olsen is, not just as a person, but as a representative of the Church. "The Church," he says, "has not gotten to where it is in this country by being indifferent to such matters."

Jackson says he is just a cop. When he sees someone murdered he wants to find out who did it.

McBride talks about how insinuations linger and what harm they can do, even if proven false. He promises Jackson that there is no coverup, whatever the appearances. When Jackson finally agrees to stay with the case (so there will be no intimation of "honest cop quits investigation because of coverup") McBride has a few last words for him:

"You have to understand something about the Saints. We were greatly persecuted. Our leaders were killed. We were driven from place to place until we found Salt Lake. A people with that sort of past is very careful about its future. Very self-protective of what they have, because it took them so long to get it. Maybe sometimes we overreact. . . . We teach the present, but also the past and future. There is a wholeness to our vision, a completeness. We are used to waiting. And we will know when it is finished."

"I don't know anything about that," Tom said. "I'm just a cop."

"And I am just your brother," McBride said.

Jackson continues his investigation of Olsen and Warren, in his own way. It is a mark of the novel's balance that he discovers one of the two to be as squeaky

clean as the Mormons claim, while finding the other has a less savory side. Again and again Mormon doctrines, cultural practices, personalities, and history are called in question, examined, and found to be flawed *and* salvific, unpalatable *and* delicious to the taste. But the author is not only interested in balance. What draws him to Salt Lake City is a religion that has partially succeeded in realizing its utopian dreams.

As McBride says, "there is a wholeness to our vision, a completeness." While that sense of perfection gives Mormons the tremendous power to create a flourishing, largely peaceful empire in the Great Basin, it also inspires a "fortress mentality," an intolerance for imperfection, a need to stifle criticism, a desire to selectively rewrite history, and a deadening stasis.

Jackson attends a general conference session near the end and observes the other visitors:

"They were the tourists of their faith and Salt Lake was their Mecca, the place they came to for inspiration and renewal, a city set down within a curve of snow-capped mountains, a fortress against that alien, gentile world they had no wish to join or understand. And yet, somewhere within the heart of their own citadel, someone was killing them."

That "someone" has an extremist vision of the inviolable perfection

of the Church. Because the leaders of the Church believe in continuing revelation, because they have not entirely committed themselves to defending present perfection, there has been a major change in doctrine. The murderer, with a vested interest in the history he sees as violated, is determined to purify his Church. The problems Jackson perceives in the Church and its members, when intensified and focused in a single fanatical individual, result in violence. Or to state it the other way around: the murders done in the name of religion, and as part of a perceived historical pattern, merely magnify tendencies present in the Church as a whole.

That *Tabernacle* is a murderous parable about the uses of history becomes clear near the end of the book, if it hasn't already, when Jackson visits the offices of two professors of history at BYU. One of them, Professor Kraft, has packed his books and is leaving the university, presumably because of limits on his writing similar to those McBride tried to place on Jackson's investigation. The other, Professor Lambert, plays a key role in the final moments of the novel. But I shall not discuss that here, leaving the final unraveling of this lethal (hi)story for you.

Thomas Cook has written about the dark side of ideologies before. His 1982 novel *The Orchids* is largely the diary of a Nazi concentration-camp doctor who,

with others even more evil than himself, tried to exterminate the evil he thought he saw in the world. But if this were not obviously Cook's book, I would be tempted to ascribe it to a slightly disgruntled BYU history professor writing under a pseudonym. The author shows an uncanny sense for both the positive and negative sides of Mormonism, and especially for the complications involved in writing "faithful history." There are a few factual errors: two men in Provo plan to meet half an hour later in the Hotel Utah, "disfellowshipment" is mistaken for excommunication, and BYU is attributed a department of theology; but these could be explained as clever dissembling. The cover of the paperback, under the title *Tabernacle*, is dominated by an embossed picture of the Salt Lake temple. But lest we scoff at another error, the tabernacle can be seen hiding in the background. In this, as in any good mystery, things are not as they seem.

Tabernacle is more than a first-rate murder mystery. In murder, its author has found the ugly final consequence of an ideology certain of its own perfection. Mormons, Catholics, Republicans, Marxists, and literary critics would all do well to read this book.

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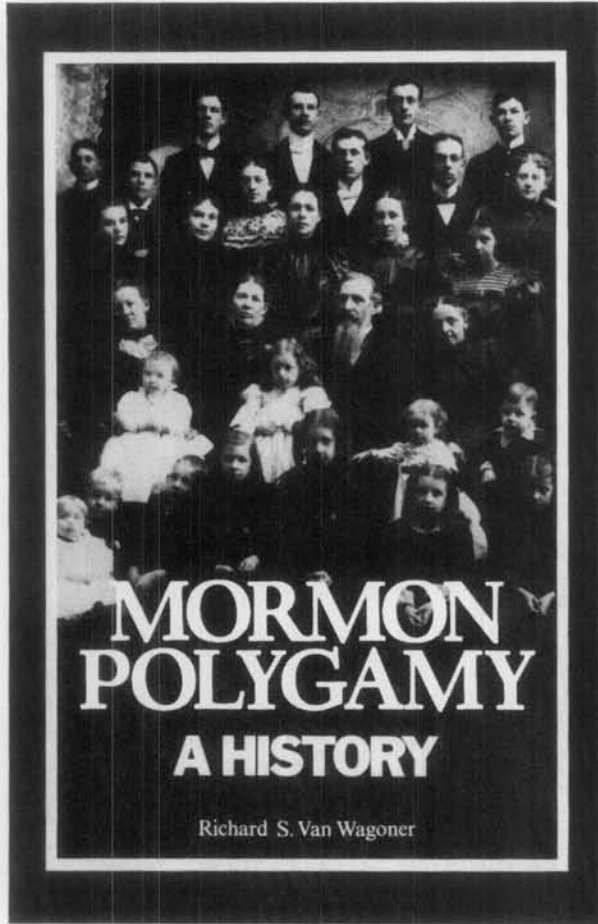
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