

# NEWS AND

NEWS

## Record Turnout at Symposium Eight

The eighth annual Sunstone Theological Symposium, held last August at the Salt Lake Sheraton, attracted a crowd of about 1500 people, who came to hear discussions on topics as varied as the place of polygamy in Mormon doctrine, the significance of the Book of Mormon, and the place of homosexuals in the contemporary Church.

At the opening session a panel addressed the question of the historical accuracy of the Book of Mormon. Salt Lake attorney Blake Ostler described the book as "an ancient document mediated through the mind of a modern prophet," arguing that Joseph's own background and experiences had played a significant role in the process of translating the plates.

Richard Sherlock, an assistant professor of philosophy at Utah State University, said that the Book of Mormon's historical accuracy was

not the main point at issue. The real question, he said, is whether the Book of Mormon is the revealed word of God. "If it is the word of God," asserted Sherlock, "then questions of historical setting and accuracy are superfluous."

High Nibley, BYU professor emeritus of ancient studies, spoke on the Book of Mormon and its apocalyptic message for 20th-century America. "There are nations that were old when Lehi left Jerusalem and still survive today," he said. "But this is not so in the New World, where no high civilization has survived." He then reviewed the book's continual message to repent or be destroyed, and concluded by outlining ten steps its people took toward destruction, beginning with leaving the law of consecration and becoming privatized, continuing through becoming polarized and ending, as Professor Nibley put it, by being "pulverized."

Nibley noted that "the most significant thing about polarization is that it puts an end to any thought of repentance in which lies any hope for survival and peace, and leads in the end to the Book of Mormon phenomenon which until recently I thought was quite fantastically impossible, namely the destruction of both contestants in war."

Another aspect of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling was addressed by Dr. C. Jess Groesbeck in his paper "Joseph Smith and His Individuation." At one of the symposium's best attended sessions, Groesbeck explored the ways that Joseph's attitudes toward women and marriage might have been colored by his childhood experiences. According to Groesbeck, Joseph might have regarded the commandment to practice plural marriage as an Abrahamic testing of his spiritual commitment. Joseph, he said, was "confronted with a command to do what he feared most. At the same time he had desires toward multiple relationships, complicated by a wife who opposed it all." Groesbeck felt that his research reconciled some apparently contradictory aspects of Joseph Smith's complex personality. "RLDS Church members believe Joseph Smith was a monogamist," said Groesbeck, "while the LDS insist he was a polygamist. In a historical sense I believe they are both right." He concluded that although Joseph felt torn over his practice of plural marriage until the day he died, he triumphed in the sense that he remained steadfast in his commitment to God.

The difficult topic of homosexuality was addressed at two sessions of this year's symposium. Several perspectives on the issue were presented at a panel discussion which included two doctors who had counseled homosexuals, the mother of a gay son, and two representatives from Affirmation, a support group for gay Latter-day Saints. Dr. Robert Card, who had worked with many gay Mormons in an attempt to change their orientation, gave an honest account of his experience. "I



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# REVIEWS

can't say that I've met with much success," he said bluntly. He said that at present he tries to help his gay patients to achieve goals they set for themselves, whether that be changing their orientation or coming to terms with their homosexuality. Dr. Jan Stout concurred, and described the ways that his own perceptions of homosexuality had changed over the past fifteen years. He outlined the growing evidence suggesting that an individual's sexual orientation is not a matter of conscious choice. Other panelists included Margot Cheney, who gave a moving account of coming to terms with her son's homosexuality, and Gary Booher and Ron Kershaw, two members of Affirmation who described their experiences growing up as gay Mormons and their struggle to reconcile these two facets of their lives.

Another perspective on homosexuality in the Church was presented by Carol Lynn Pearson who related her experience of marrying a homosexual, having a family, divorcing her husband and then later caring for him until his death from AIDS. Pearson urged greater compassion for gay church members. "We must recognize that these strange people doing these strange things are not just someone over there," she said. "They are ours, they are our sons, our brothers, and once in a while our husbands."

The closing banquet on Saturday night featured a talk by Edward Kimball, a professor at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at BYU, on the administration of his father Spencer W. Kimball. The most interesting aspects of Kimball's talk dealt with the more personal side of his father's term of office. His account of President Kimball's last few years was particularly moving. Following his last round of surgery to relieve pressure on the brain, President Kimball never fully recovered his earlier vigor. "He became blind," reported Kimball, "and somewhat discouraged at being so little able to carry out his responsibilities." Kimball noted that although some people have wondered why his father

continued to serve after he could no longer offer active leadership, by doing so he set an example of humility, faith, and perseverance to the end.

Kimball concluded by recalling that when his father had been president for five years, he once said: "I still wonder what the Lord had in mind, making a little country boy like me [President of the Church], unless He knew I didn't have any sense and

would keep on working." Kimball's mother, Camilla Eyring Kimball, was also able to attend and hear this tribute to her late husband.

The general experience of the Symposium participants was highly positive. The program offered many opportunities to affirm one's faith and to challenge the intellect, and left most of those who attended looking forward to Symposium Nine in August 1987.

## UPDATE

By Maxine Hanks

### New Director For Smith Institute

"I don't know who makes those decisions, I just know they did me a favor and I'm very happy about the situation," remarked Leonard Arrington, about his recent release as director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History at Brigham Young University. Arrington was replaced 31 July

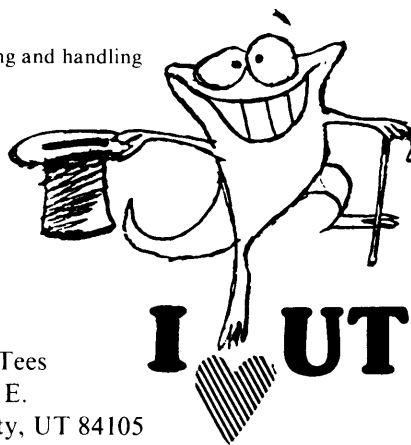
1986 by Ronald K. Esplin, a fellow institute research historian. Esplin has worked at the institute along with Arrington and six other research historians since it was created out of the Church Historian's office in 1980.

"Any one of us could have done the job," said Esplin, "but I'm glad

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to do it for a time. I'm glad the transition was a smooth one; there has always been talk about the future of the Institute, and we're all happy to be able to continue."

Esplin has a bachelor's degree from the University of Utah, a master's from the University of Virginia, and a doctorate from BYU. From 1972 to 1980 he worked for the LDS Historical Department. Esplin's publications deal with 19th-century Mormon history, with emphasis on Kirtland, Nauvoo, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

The change was made for a number of reasons. "I requested the change for months," said Arrington. "Now I'm relieved of the administrative side of my job—ordering supplies, paying the bills. I don't enjoy doing that at all. It's too bureaucratic—I just write books."

"BYU has a policy of rotating department chairs, deans and institution directors. Our staff had been aware that a change was coming," said Esplin.

"Leonard was an exception to the University retirement policy," explained Stan L. Albrecht, dean of the College of Family, Home and Social Sciences. "He was one of only two BYU professors over the age of 65 who were in administrative positions. Leonard is scheduled to retire next July, so we felt it would be best for the institute if we had a year of transition wherein we could still have Leonard's input."

"I'm not retired!" assured Arrington. "I'm still faculty and I'm working full-time on six projects. Retirement is what happens to old people. I'm young—I'm only 45 or so."

According to Albrecht, who recommended Ron Esplin to BYU president Jeffrey Holland, Esplin was the logical choice for the position. "The position of director is actually a half-time position. We lacked the full-time position and the resources necessary to offer this job to an outsider. Ron had already been helping manage administrative affairs for the institute for two or three years. There was strong support among the group for Ron."

Regarding the future of the institute, Esplin said, "I don't expect major changes; we will develop as time goes on—We're democratic here. We all feel strongly about what we can accomplish here, and we feel we can continue best in our present structure."

The current major projects of the institute historians include: Leonard Arrington, history of Mormon historians and two biographies; Ronald Esplin, the 1840 mission of the twelve apostles to England; Ronald Walker, Heber J. Grant biography; Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, Eliza R. Snow diaries, poetry and biography; Carol Cornwall Madsen, Emmeline Wells biography; William Hartley, 1861 immigration to Utah; Richard Jensen, emigration from Europe.

# LDS Poet Meg Munk Dead at 42

Margaret Rampton Munk, scholar, writer, musician, teacher and friend, died of cancer 7 July 1986 at her home in Silver Spring, Maryland.

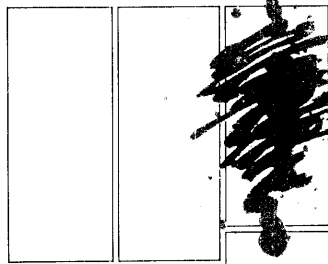
Daughter of former Utah governor Calvin L. Rampton and Lucy Beth Cardon, Meg was a gifted storyteller, a high school journalist and editor of the University of Utah's Daily Utah Chronicle. Valedictorian at both her high school and college graduations, Meg received more nominations and honors than any student in her class. She went on to work on a kibbutz in Israel.

Later, while earning her master's and doctorate degrees in government from Harvard University, she developed a strong interest in international issues. At Harvard she also met her husband, Russell Munk.

After graduating from Harvard, Meg taught political science at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan, the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines and American University in Washington D.C.

A devoutly religious person, active in the Mormon church and mother to three children, Meg never abandoned her writing which revealed a belief that, in every aspect of life, questions are essential. Essayist, poet and short story writer, Meg's work was published in *Dialogue*, *Exponent II* and *Sunstone*. In 1984 she won an honorable mention in Sunstone's 1985 D.K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest; her winning story, "A Proposal" appeared in 1986. She also participated in several Sunstone Symposia. A quote from her recent book of poetry *So Far*, illustrates her empathy for humans and love for God:

*"Let me speak  
To Thy lost sheep  
As one who,  
Understanding how  
they went astray  
Still loves the shepherd."*



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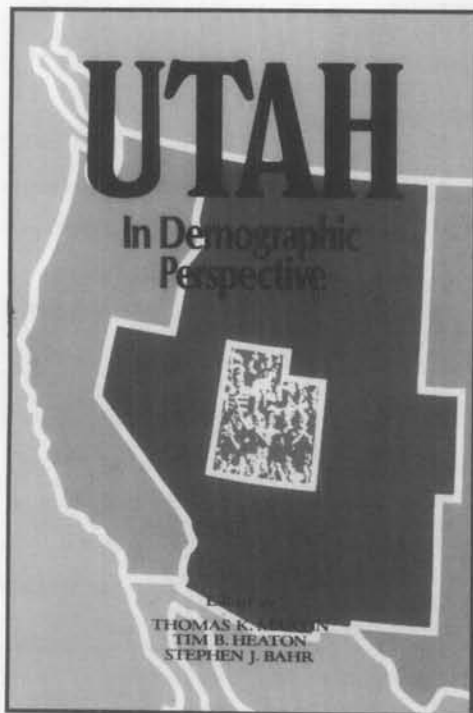
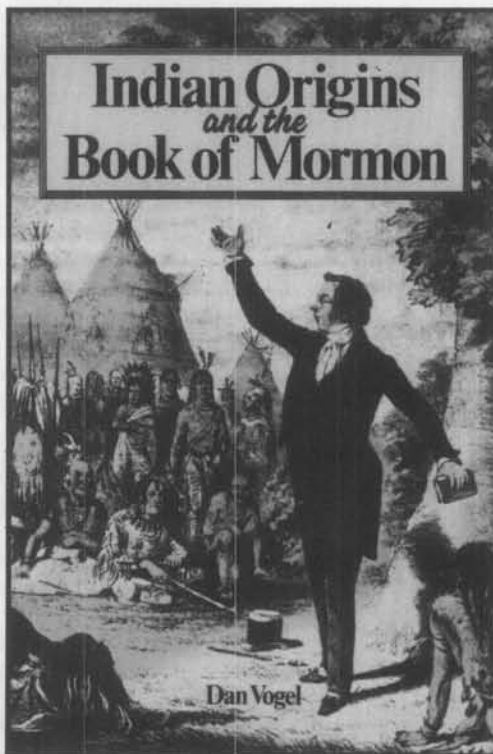
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# Prophet in the Promised Land

**BRIGHAM YOUNG, AMERICAN MOSES**

BY LEONARD J. ARRINGTON

ALFRED A. KNOPF, NEW YORK, 1985, \$24.95

Reviewed by Richard W. Sadler

For more than a century, Brigham Young has waited for a biographer, and finally in Leonard Arrington he has found one. As Arrington notes in his preface (p. xiv), "previous attempts have suffered most frequently from inadequate documentation and the author's preformed bias—either for or against the Mormon leader." *American Moses* paints Brother Brigham with generally favorable brush strokes in large measure from primary source materials which have been recently catalogued. Arrington notes that there are sufficient primary documents to merit several book-length studies of the several facets of Young's career including his career as husband and father, his three decades as church president, his six years as governor of the Utah territory, his six years as superintendent of Indian Affairs, his efforts in colonizing the Great Basin, his business and economic interests, and his theological beliefs and assertions.

This volume stands as Arrington's portrait of the "Essential Brigham" — an enigmatic, complex, strongwilled, practical, hardworking, nineteenth century American religious leader who shaped the destiny of his people only slightly less than did his intimate friend Joseph Smith, Jr., the founding prophet and president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Like Smith, Young's roots were grounded in the soil of Vermont and nurtured in the small towns along the Erie Canal. His upbringing in poor circumstances in the "burned-over district" gave him in part an intense interest in religion. He apprenticed as a carpenter, as a painter, and as a glazier, and later noted that a long day's work was worth "three or four bits" (37½

cents to 50 cents). At age 23 he became a Methodist, and his interest in Mormonism was aroused in 1830 by the Book of Mormon. He was baptized a Mormon in 1832 in his own millpond at Mendon, and immediately ordained an Elder.

For the next twelve years he proved his dedication to Mormonism and Joseph Smith as a missionary and an Apostle. He proved to be one of Joseph's most loyal supporters, and was among the first to participate in the endowment ceremony, plural marriage, and the "Holy Order." When Joseph died in June 1844, Brigham was President of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. He became the new leader of the Nauvoo Saints, but his leadership was not unopposed. Arrington notes Brigham's difficulties with Emma Smith and others who determined to follow other leaders.

Young is remembered best for his efforts as a pioneer—leading the Saints from Illinois across Iowa and eventually to the Great Basin. Then for more than three decades, he encouraged missionary work, the gathering to Zion, and colonization of the Great Basin. Ordained as President and Prophet of the church in December of 1847, Brigham remained outspoken in outlining his relationship with the Quorum of the Twelve, "If this body [the Twelve] is the head of the Church and I am the head of the Quorum [then] I am the mouthpiece and you are the belly." He noted on another occasion, "I do not mean that my tongue shall not offend my brethren. I shall and do want to grow with you. I feel towards the Twelve [the] same as I do my pet young ones, that I could put you in my pockets same as my wives and children. I mean to act according to the Holy Ghost. I want to put you in my pockets so that when I want to

talk with you, I put my hand in my pocket, take you out and talk with you. (Arrington, 155). After his second overland journey to the Great Basin in 1848, Brigham did not leave the west until his death in 1877.

Approximately two-thirds of *American Moses* details Young's activities as church president, Indian agent, territorial governor, father and husband, colonizer, and spokesman for the Kingdom. His commonsense, practical approach touched most aspects of life in the territory. He gave more than 800 speeches and sermons - usually without notes. As he once stated, "I opened my mouth and the Lord filled it." (*Journal of Discourses* 13:211). He stressed hard work, the payment of an honest tithe and the need to go when called as a missionary or to colonize a new community. Some 500 Mormon communities were founded during his lifetime—most at his

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## CAROL LYNN PEARSON—

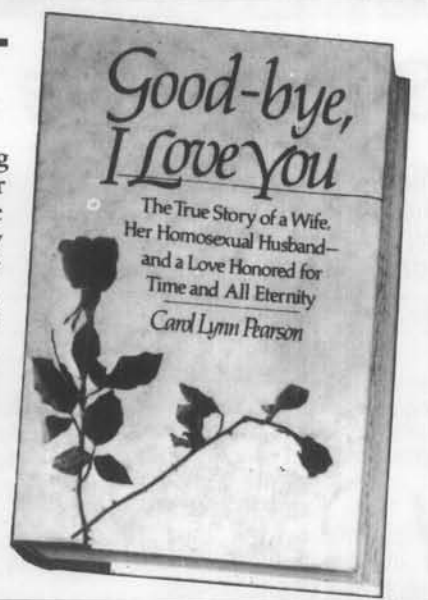
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suggestion and/or with his approval.

Arrington's descriptions of Brigham as a family man are delightful. With 27 wives and 57 children (the first born in 1825 and the last in 1870), family life was an ongoing challenge. Brigham's daily routine as well as his concern about teaching the gospel to his family are illustrated. He constantly urged his family toward good works and chided them when they were not in attendance for evening family prayer. He played with them, swam with them (in modest bathing costume), and attended the theater with them. His many speeches on family relations reflected his own philosophy, "I endeavor to govern my family with kindness. I tell them what is right and I get them to obey without whipping them. If I cannot get my family to do as I wish without quarreling with them, I will not say a word about it" (Arrington, 335).

In a summary chapter titled "The legacy of Brigham Young", Arrington notes that Young's obvious achievements came about as a result of his ever-present and practical decision making. Through his leadership, Brigham reminded his followers that they were the Saints of the Most High, the Chosen of God, and the Camp of Israel. He stressed cooperative ventures among the Saints including the Perpetual Emigrating Company, all of the tasks of pioneering and colonization, and economic cooperatives. He urged day by day work for both temporal and

spiritual salvation. He believed that Mormonism was synonymous with all truth, no matter where it was found. He stated,

*Were you to ask me how it was that I embraced "Mormonism", I should answer, for the simple reason that it embraces all truth in heaven and on earth, in the earth, under the earth, and in hell, if there be any truth there. There is not truth outside of it; there is not virtue outside of it; there is nothing holy and honorable outside of it; for, wherever these principles are found among all the creations of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and his order and Priesthood embrace them." (Arrington, 405)*

He left the indelible stamp of his powerful personality on his followers and their descendants, and this personality which is reflected in his letters, diaries and sermons, continues to perplex historians. Arrington notes Young was sometimes harsh and outspoken, and at times he indulged in exaggeration and hyperbole. He was kindly and benevolent, and yet sarcastic, anti-intellectual, and not averse to the threat of violence. He was a strong leader, but clearly did not rule his people with an iron hand. He chastised church leaders as easily as he did the rank and file, sometimes using direct and offensive language. To Bishops and tithing clerks he wrote of problems such as

*When a good, handsome cow has been turned in on tithing, she has been smuggled, and an old three-titted cow—one that would kick the tobacco out of the mouth of a man who went to milk her—*

*would be turned in to the General Tithing Office, instead of the good cow. (Arrington, 181)*

And to a man seeking advice on marriage Brigham wrote,

*But you are naturally inclined to be a little wild, and to draw away from settlements to places unpleasant and unsafe. I understand that you have lately been expressing a wish to settle in the Uinta Valley, and until you can tame your thoughts and actions so far as to be willing to live where a family can be safe and have a reasonable opportunity for social enjoyment and improvement, I am of the opinion that it will be altogether best for you to continue to live the life of a hermit for I know of no woman worth a goat who would be willing to agree with your wild unsocial ways for any length of time. (Arrington, 316)*

The text, the footnotes, the appendices, and the bibliography are all woven together with mastery to present a Brigham Young made of whole cloth. Such a Brigham has really never appeared before in print. Yet this reader hoped for even a bit more of Brother Brigham. Brigham the colonizer's successes are outlined but little is said about the failures. The Orson Pratt/Brigham Young theological difficulties and the "Adam-God" doctrine are both treated with brevity. Overall, however, the book is finely crafted and interesting to both the scholar and the general reader.

**RICHARD W. SADLER** is Dean of the College of Social Sciences at Weber State College.

# Sin or Bore?

## MORMON POLYGAMY: A HISTORY

RICHARD VAN WAGONER  
SIGNATURE BOOKS, 1986  
307 pp., \$19.95.

By Kerry William Bate

*But what's favour amongst four?  
Polygamy may well be held in dread  
Not only as a sin, but as a bore*  
Byron, "Don Juan," canto VI, xii.

It was a part of Byron's ostentatious affectation to be indifferent to sin and find everything a bore. However, neither his contemporaries nor successors were so charitable toward sin nor apathetic about the exotic. Polygamy is a subject which will never lose its interest, so long as human beings refrain from reproducing asexually and two-parent families remain the norm.

Interest in polygamy made 19th century Utah the empire of the muckraker and the capitol of the pious public confession. Fanny Stenhouse's fascinating but sometimes superficial memoirs spoke for a genre: *Tell It All*. The Victorians, not able to read letters in *Penthouse* promoting exotic sex practices, could at least peruse titillating condemnations of those practices in the pulp magazines of the day.

Unfortunately when the literature surrounding a subject is either sanctimoniously hostile or submissively supportive it becomes difficult to wade through the polemics and come up with a reasonable concept of reality. Witness the present emotional debate over South Africa and Nicaragua.

Despite the reams of paper devoted to Mormon polygamy, the hordes of self-righteous lecturers, authors and defenders—all contaminated by hypocritical and unctuous political posturing—despite all this, until Van Wagoner's book almost nothing had been written about the subject that was comprehensive, objective, and scholarly. Only Kimball Young's hopelessly outdated book, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* came near the mark.

Graced with a cover picture of Joseph F. Smith's enormous family, Van Wagoner's book reminds us that polygamy makes human reproduction seem as simple and pointless as the multiplication of polliwogs, and we know that Van Wagoner could easily have sunk into yet another of the semi-sensuous and superficial hack jobs we have seen in the romance magazines of today or the twaddle of an earlier era. Alex Joseph was invented to pander to that audience.

Instead, Van Wagoner treats the subject dispassionately, and his chapters on pre-Utah polygamy are especially superb. We learn of Joseph Smith's situational morality ("That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another"), and the fact that Smith often married—or attempted to marry—women already wed, is treated matter-of-factly. The polyandrous menage of Zina Huntington-Jacobs-Smith-Young is explained: "Zina was resealed [in 1846] by proxy to the murdered Joseph Smith and in the same session was 'sealed for time' to Brigham Young. Faithful Henry B. Jacobs [her husband] stood as an official witness to both ceremonies."

"Oh how happy I could be if I only could see you and the little children, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh," Jacobs as late as 1852, "Oh Zina, can I will I ever get you again, answer the question please."

But generally it was the woman who felt like the victim. Orson Pratt, a one-time polygamy opponent, discovered that while women had the right to refuse to give consent to a husband's multiple marriages, those who did so would lose "the privilege of enjoying the society of a husband in eternity. You forfeit your right to an endless increase of immortal lives. And even the children with

which you may be favored in this life will not be entrusted to your charge for eternity; but you will be left in that world without a husband, without a family, without a kingdom."

Polygamy under Joseph Smith was furtive, duplicitous and clearly sensual. Brigham Young, adhering closely to his New England origins, was determined to fulfill Byron's promise that it be a bore. He seemed to personally enjoy the companionship of men, and his attitudes toward women were unapologetically chauvinistic. He counselled John D. Lee to "Get good young Women when you Get them that can be controld," and abhorred the idea of having to engage in courtship. Young "said that the Gentile custom of Sparkification was done away so that the passions may not be aroused and undue advantage taken of the chastity of the Daughters of Zion by these pernicious habits &c.," reported Lee's wife Rachel.

"All their council & wisdom (although there are many good women) don't weigh as much with me as the weight of a Fly Tird," he had informed his brethren even before polygamy was officially admitted and publicly promulgated.

The most fascinating part of the book is Chapter Nine, where the attitudes of women are explored. The conflicts between public support and private anguish are handled with sensitivity and honesty. While Emmeline B. Wells and Martha H. Cannon signed editorials in the *Women's Exponent* arguing that plural marriage "gives women the highest opportunities for self-development, exercise of judgment, and arouses latent faculties," their private lives were far from satisfactory.

"O, if my husband could only love me even a little," lamented Wells, and Cannon wrote to her husband crying, "Oh for a home! A husband of my own . . . A father for my children whom they know . . ." One can't help but wonder if a good many other marriages, unencumbered by polygamy, don't suffer from the same disillusionment. Perhaps our society is realistic in recognizing that, and it explains today's high divorce rate and "serial polygamy."

Other aspects not explored by

Van Wagoner are more problematical but intriguing. What happens to a generation of embittered women? What attitudes do they convey to their children—especially female offspring? I have a thoughtful friend who traces her own mother's bitterness and anger through a multi-generational reaction to polygamy, with the original angry woman having been married at an early age to a very old and doddering man, consequently exploited and ever after disgusted. Her self-loathing was passed on to her daughters and for generations thereafter women in the family viewed themselves as exploited and inferior, hated each other and

despised the men they were forced to accept as their superiors.

Later chapters detail the eventual Mormon surrender of polygamy, contrasting the public and private positions of such leaders as Joseph F. Smith and clearly demonstrating how difficult and problematic the surrender was. Perhaps without the Reed Smoot investigation, polygamy today would be taken no more seriously by the Mormon church than spelunking. Modern polygamy is a jumbled, disorganized movement, ranging from the insanity of Ervil LeBaron to the frank sensuality of Alex Joseph. The information on today's polygamy seems superficial, uninteresting and

pointless: we wonder if the "fundamentalists" exist only to insure that Mormons can not as readily repudiate their sexual past as they have buried their socialism.

Van Wagoner's book is a capable and comprehensive work that will find a welcome—if lonely—place on the bookshelves of scholars. But it won't compete with romance magazines, *Penthouse* fantasies, or reprints of 19th century exposes. Readers interested in sin will find Van Wagoner's book a bore.

*Kerry William Bate is the Utah state housing specialist for the Division of Community Development.*

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