

# CROSSROADS OF THE WEST

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THE JOSEPH SMITH ERA OF LDS HISTORY can be divided into familiar periods that are nominally geographical: New England, New York, Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo. Nonetheless, few scholars would regard early Mormon history as essentially eastern or midwestern. Regionalism isn't a key concept, and probably for good reason. Historical studies of early Mormonism tend to be prosopographical. In such works, the concept of place doesn't matter as much as social networks across space. Historians such as D. Michael Quinn, John L. Brooke, Philip L. Barlow, Richard L. Bushman, David F. Holland, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Samuel Morris Brown have shown how early Mormonism (and early anti-Mormonism) spilled out from an Atlantic and American confluence of ideas. The founding and elaboration of the LDS Church can be conceptualized variously as the last high tide of early modern occultism, froth on the cresting wave of Jacksonian democracy, a microburst in the storm of U.S. religious experimentation, or a narrow but deep channel in Victorian death culture.

Whatever the framework, it's heady intellectual stuff. Then comes Brigham Young. Once his followers begin "the gathering," the dominant story of Mormonism becomes more institutional, political, social—and

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explicitly regional. Western narratives of pioneering and its aftermath take center stage. Mormon history more or less becomes Utah history and vice versa, until World War II and David O. McKay shake things up and outward.

From a long-range point of view, the conflation of Mormons and the American West has not been good for historiography. It has distorted Utah history, making it less diverse than it rightfully should be. It has reinforced parochialism inside the Beehive State and reinforced prejudices outside. Until the late twentieth century, relatively few “serious” U.S. historians (i.e., those schooled on the metropolitan eastern seaboard) studied post-1844 Mormonism(s). They ceded that terrain to western localists, regionalists, and history buffs. Recall that western history was for many decades considered a backwater field. “Serious” historians caricatured the U.S. West as a stage for a colorful pageant of mountain men, prospectors, cowboys, Indians, and side-show attractions such as “Chinamen” and cohabs.

Even prominent chroniclers of the “winning of the West,” including Theodore Roosevelt, ignored the founding of Utah. Compared to the Oregon Trail, or the conquest of Mexico, or the California and Pike’s Peak gold rushes, or the “Indian wars,” the Mormon colonization of the Great Basin seemed simultaneously mundane and bizarre. In the distinguished view of Frederic Logan Paxson, author of *The Last American Frontier* (1918), “The discovery of the golden plates and the magic spectacles, and the building upon them of a militant church has little part in the conquest of the frontier save as a motive force.”<sup>1</sup> Even Frederick Jackson Turner, seminal author of “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893), who emphasized settlement over conquest in his descriptions of the “farming frontier,” could find nothing to say about Latter-day Saints. More than a half century later, Turner’s intellectual successor, Ray Allen Billington, omitted Mormons from *America’s Frontier Heritage* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966).

One of the first great outside appreciators of Mormon colonization, William E. Smythe, was a newspaper editor, not a historian per se. In books, articles, and lectures, Smythe broadcast his utopian vision for the dry lands of the U.S. West: With irrigation, a sleeping empire would awake. In *The Conquest of Arid America* (1905), Smythe gave

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<sup>1</sup>Frederic Logan Paxson, *The Last American Frontier* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 87.

a brief history of the “Utah system”; praised Mormons as the “first of the Anglo-Saxon race” to solve the problem of aridity; and counted them as the earliest “white men” to build an irrigation canal in the United States. The Mormon “industrial system” offered a model for the nation. Irrigation would redeem the desert just as it had (partially) redeemed Mormonism. According to Smythe, the true secret of Mormonism was prosperity through cooperative reclamation, not the “occult power of its creed.”<sup>2</sup>

By himself, Smythe couldn’t transform attitudes; he was writing in a moment of resurgent anti-Mormonism. But it was an important start. In the long run, the history of Mormon settlement became a standard part of the historiography of the U.S. West. In the process, the image of Brigham Young was dramatically rehabilitated. Thanks to rudimentary public relations by the LDS Church, a major Hollywood biopic (1940), and the gradual ebbing of anti-Mormonism, a man once vilified as a neo-Oriental sultan earned widening respect as an all-American colonizer. In a kind of historical détente, Saints and “Gentiles” agreed to admire the gritty resolve of Mormon trekkers and town-builders. Leonard J. Arrington’s landmark *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958) was noteworthy in part for its materialist approach that allowed the author to portray early Utah Mormons as rational (rather than fanatical) communitarians. All in all, pioneering was the least bizarre aspect of Mormon history. For white, native-born, English-speaking Americans of various Christian denominations, oxen drivers and sun-bonneted mothers were shared cultural material—a common point of reference, heritage, and inspiration. In books such as John D. Unruh’s authoritative *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), desert Saints, Gold Rush Saints, and the Mormon Battalion have taken their rightful places in the American annals of overland emigration. LDS social historians have filled in the story with detailed studies of pioneer folkways.<sup>3</sup>

However, the historiographical emphasis on pioneering can also hurt the image of Mormons, for there are demons in the desert as

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<sup>2</sup>William E. Smythe, *The Conquest of Arid America*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 51–76.

<sup>3</sup>Examples include Lowry Nelson, *The Mormon Village: A Pattern and Technique of Land Settlement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1952);

well as angels on the prairie. Latter-day Saints hold responsibility for one of the greatest tragedies in the history of U.S. overland migration: the Mountain Meadows Massacre. If this mass murder of a wagon train—premeditated and duplicitous—wasn't bad enough, Mormons covered up the crime, protected the criminals, obstructed justice, and hampered memorialization. These sequential outrages ensured that the massacre would remain a stain on the LDS Church and would endure, outside the Beehive State, as the best-known episode of Utah history. Not until the diligence and courage of Juanita Brooks (1950) did the Church begin to reckon with this ugliness.<sup>4</sup> Before Brooks, Mormons always thought of themselves as victims of persecution rather than perpetrators. Even after Brooks, the persecution and messiah complexes that protected Mormons from examining and expiating their past acts of collective violence survived, thanks in large part to heritage organizations such as Daughters of Utah Pioneers as well as any number of Church publications.

Ultimately it took someone more tendentious than Brooks—Will Bagley, author of the prize-winning *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002)—to prod the Church History Department to belatedly finish a *mea minima culpa* for what happened on September 11, 1857. Whatever its limitations, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* by Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) stands as a necessary corrective and useful counterpoint to *Blood of the Prophets*. (Unfortunately, the promised second volume from Turley et al. has yet to appear.) It is left to some future historian—preferably not any

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Richard C. Poulsen, *The Pure Experience of Order: Essays on the Symbolic in the Folk Material Culture of Western America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Larry M. Logue, *A Sermon in the Desert: Belief and Behavior in Early St. George, Utah* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant, eds., *Nearly Everything Imaginable: The Everyday Life of Utah's Mormon Pioneers* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1999); Stanley Buchholz Kimball and Violet T. Kimball, *Villages on Wheels: A Social History of the Gathering to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011); and Brock Cheney, *Plain But Wholesome: Foodways of the Mormon Pioneers* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012).

<sup>4</sup>Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950; 2d ed., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

kind of Mormon—to write the definitive work about Mountain Meadows: a synthesis, neither condemnatory nor apologetic, that draws on the research and perspectives of Bagley and Turley, while fully engaging with outside scholarship. Only then will the good work begun by Brooks be complete.

The role of Paiutes at Mountain Meadows—as coerced accessories and later as scapegoats—points to a barely acknowledged historical point: Over the course of a century and a half, Utah Mormons committed sequential wrongs against Utah Indians, including multiple massacres, the ordinary and systematic violence of colonization and dispossession, shady legal dealings, voting and school discrimination (a western version of Jim Crow), and acculturation and indoctrination in the name of child services. This litany, which is not comprehensive, should not be considered controversial. It is simply true.

There have been four main ways to interpret the frontier interactions of Mormons and Natives. The first, exemplified by Peter Gofredson's *Indian Depredations in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Skelton Publishing, 1919)—a book still occasionally used uncritically by LDS scholars even though it's essentially a work of folklore based on foggy memories of aged members of the Utah Indian War Veterans Association—holds that “Lamanites” were not yet ready for “redemption” as shown by their unprovoked attacks on innocent Saints. The second approach, still common among lay Mormons and official apologists, cherry-picks examples of magnanimity by individual pioneers to “prove” that Mormons behaved better than other American settlers in comparable frontier settings. Jacob Hamblin has long served as the model. Recently, Todd M. Compton's prize-winning *A Frontier Life: Jacob Hamblin, Explorer and Indian Missionary* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013) added valuable nuance to the discussion. The third interpretive viewpoint—common among historians of the U.S. West—asserts that Mormon pioneers were actually worse than other settler groups because they failed so miserably to live up to their exalted beliefs. Judged by their own standards, Latter-day Saints come across as hypocrites or transgressors—or both. A fourth, less judgmental (and less common) position argues that LDS culture and theology existed in creative tension with American culture and politics. While Mormons inherited from Joseph Smith an unusual racist perspective on Native Americans, they also inherited a normative racist perspective from Euro-American culture. Interpreted this way, theocratic Utah Territory offers an illuminating and sobering case

study in the history of internal U.S. colonialism.

Regardless of politics, we can all be glad that historians of Mormonism can presently focus more on interpreting documents than accessing them. The reopening of the Brigham Young Collection at the LDS Church History Department signaled the start of the second act of Leonard Arrington's "Camelot." (I refrain from calling it a golden age.) For comparison, it's instructive if depressing to read letters from Dale Morgan to Juanita Brooks such as this one from 1945:

Naturally I have devoted a good deal of thought to your situation since [Heber J.] Grant's death. If I were to give you some advice, it would be to wait about six weeks or two months until George Albert Smith has had a chance to get settled in his new job, and then go see him, the President of the Church direct, about your M[ountain] M[eadows] M[assacre] project. I believe he has possibly a more realistic view of Mormon history than most of the General Authorities, and the fact that he is at the very top would make his help count for something. Argue to him along the lines I earlier discussed in connection with [David O.] McKay. Moreover, I urge you to go about this as soon as Smith has had a chance to take hold and get out from under the first press of business. I don't know whether you have noticed the current apostolic seniority list, but after [George F.] Richards[,] Joseph Fielding Smith and David O. McKay stand in line, and if something should happen in succession to George Albert Smith and Richards, you would be confronted with about as reactionary a pair of historical minds as you could find in a month's search in the Church. So if you are going to try to write your MMM study within the bounds of Church sanction, you had better make the most of the situation now prevailing. You may not get anywhere with Smith, but at least he will receive you kindly, I think, especially if you point out all the angles involved. You should of course come armed with your letters of accreditation from [the] Huntington [Library], your letters from any local authorities, your letters from the Morris family, etc., etc. And while you are at it, you might boldly ask Smith's help in getting the notes Andrew Jenson took on the MMM as related in his Autobiography.<sup>5</sup>

Morgan, Brooks, and their remarkable literary cohort—including Bernard DeVoto, Wallace Stegner, and Fawn Brodie—demonstrate that parochialism can have benefits. It's hard to imagine these

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<sup>5</sup>John Phillip Walker, ed., *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism: Correspondence and a New History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 76.

writers, none of whom earned a doctorate in history, becoming such outstanding historians without exposure to Utah's hothouse environment. The Beehive State circa 1940 provided great creative tension for aspiring historians: a hegemonic narrative to write against, a rich tradition of lay history, and a tantalizing archive of little-used—and sometimes hidden—documents.<sup>6</sup>

The historiographical conflation of post-Joseph Smith Mormonism with the “Old West” or “frontier West” has worked for and against the scholarly reputation of Mormon history. Detail-rich subjects like handcarts and Hole-in-the-Rock make for rousing storytelling but unexciting inquiry. Classic books by David E. Miller (1959) and LeRoy and Ann Hafen (1960) have never been updated by scholars partly because they are wonderfully researched and narrated and mostly because they don't belong to an ongoing academic debate that is regularly contested and updated.<sup>7</sup> Richard E. Bennett's *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846–48* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997) falls in the same category. It's easy for historians outside the MHA to disregard such works as faith-promoting history with footnotes.

Within the hothouse of Utah, the dominant Mormon narrative has inspired counter-narratives, also meticulously documented, of religious tyranny and ecclesiastical rebellion in the frontier West. Among historians active today, Will Bagley has assumed the mantle of the insider-provocateur. A virtual one-man publishing house, Bagley—often in collaboration with another master of documents, David L. Bigler—has authored numerous note-heavy monographs while editing a top-shelf series of reference books in western Mormo-Americana (*KINGDOM IN THE WEST: THE MORMONS AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER* from the Arthur H. Clark imprint of the University of Oklahoma Press). Notwithstanding his prodigious archival labor, Bagley, like Dale Morgan before him, is not well known outside Mormon and western history circles, despite the critical and controversial success of *Blood of the Prophets*.

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<sup>6</sup>Gary Topping has explored this dynamic in the group biography *Utah Historians and the Reconstruction of Western History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup>David E. Miller, *Hole-in-the-Rock: An Epic in the Colonization of the Great American West* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1959); and LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960).

Historians of the North American West can be allies, participants, or passive observers of Mormon history in its regionalist mode. The Western History Association (1969) has long been an academic champion of Mormon history. Its annual conference traditionally includes a Mormon history session. Surely it helps that Utah State University has served as the home for the association's journal, the *Western Historical Quarterly*, for more than forty years. Most of the *WHQ*'s editors-in-chief, past and present, including Leonard J. Arrington, S. George Ellsworth, Charles S. Peterson, and David Rich Lewis, have Utah roots. It probably helps, too, that the greatest western history mentor of the late twentieth century, Howard Lamar of Yale University, has an abiding interest in Utah, as evidenced by his pioneering comparative history *The Far Southwest, 1846–1912: A Territorial History*, rev. ed. (1966; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

When the New Western History came along in the 1980s and 1990s, one might have expected leading figures such as Patricia Nelson Limerick (one of Lamar's star students) to critique Utah-centric Mormon historians for being excessively Turnerian. After all, the revisionist themes championed by New Western Historians—e.g., conquest, colonialism, gender, race, class, environment—hardly appeared in Mormon history. Works like Eugene E. Campbell's *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988) and Leonard J. Arrington's *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) seemed instantly old-fashioned after Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987). (The contemporaneous New Mormon History affected scholarship on the Joseph Smith period much more than the Brigham Young period.) But Limerick wasn't interested in Mormon historiography per se. She had taller trees to fell. She demonstrated to the East Coast academic establishment how Mormons (including some of her own ancestors) could exemplify religious, racial, ethnic, and legal complexities that made the U.S. West distinct and distinctively important for the history of the United States.

And yet: It has largely been historians with Utah and/or Mormon connections who have taken up Limerick's "peace initiative."<sup>8</sup> The late Peggy Pascoe, who once belonged to the faculty of the University of Utah, included a Protestants-meet-Mormons case study in

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<sup>8</sup>Patricia Nelson Limerick, "Peace Initiative: Using the Mormons to

her revelatory work of New Western History *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). The final book by Pascoe's former colleague Dean L. May (who also died too young), bore a misleadingly old-fashioned title, *Three Frontiers: Family, Land, and Society in the American West, 1850–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), when it was in fact a state-of-the-art social history that placed Utah in comparison with two other modes and locales of western settlement. May's legacy lives on. His most prominent student, W. Paul Reeve, in *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), complicated the usual story of Mormon-Indian relations by considering a sub-region of Utah Territory that became part of Nevada that encompassed significant numbers of "Gentile" miners as well as LDS farmers and Paiutes. Another notable post-Limerick monograph, Ronald W. Walker's *Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), went beyond the usual Mormon suspects—pioneers, polygamists, and zealots. Walker's pages are instead filled with urbane, arts-loving, reform-minded, pro-commerce, quasi-secularist, semi-spiritualist, and mostly monogamous Mormons, albeit schismatic Saints.

Take away historians with Utah connections (including me) and you find a disappointingly small number of scholars of the trans-Mississippi West who have followed Limerick's call to seriously study western Mormons. Why? It might partly be a function of lingering prejudice, but I suspect it's much more an ironic function of the overwhelming amount of sources and the sheer number of existing titles produced by scholars, hobbyists, and apologists associated with Brigham Young University, the Church Educational System, and the Church History Department. Unless one grows up in Utah and through socialization picks up Mormon lingo and basic Church history, doing research in Salt Lake and Provo can be daunting—especially for a graduate student—not because stacks are closed but because there are so many stacks of esoteric material. Even prize-winning dissertation-books from Ivy League presses

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Rethink Culture and Ethnicity in American History," *Journal of Mormon History* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 1–20, reprinted in Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 235–55.

such as Jon T. Coleman's *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004) and Ned Blackhawk's *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), both of which use nineteenth-century Utah for case studies and bear scant evidence of archival research in Utah. It is hard to imagine major historical associations awarding prizes to similarly under-researched monographs if the setting were, say, eighteenth-century Massachusetts. It's all too rare for an outside historian like John G. Turner to put in the necessary months of labor at North Temple to become an expert from scratch.

In his breakout book, *Brigham Young* (2012), Turner perceptively notes that the second LDS prophet "brought many of the key political issues of mid-nineteenth-century America into sharp relief: westward expansion, popular sovereignty, religious freedom, vigilantism, and Reconstruction."<sup>9</sup> If you enlarge from the person of territorial governor Young to the territory itself, you can add to Turner's list: slavery, emancipation, citizenship, suffrage, immigration, pluralism, whiteness, family law, state power, incorporation, and economic nationalization. Deseret history, so marginal in most narratives, can become a vital part of the republic's past.

Tellingly, Sarah Barringer Gordon's *The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002)—for U.S. historians, the most talked-about "Mormon history" book of the last fifteen years—freshened a stale topic, the political fight over plural marriage, by placing it in the context of U.S. constitutional law in the post-Civil War era. Gordon pointed the way to something even bigger. What Gustive O. Larson once called *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1971) can now be reconceived as part of what Elliott West designates "Greater Reconstruction."<sup>10</sup> The narrative of *The Mormon Question* needs to be combined and reconciled with Joshua Paddison's newer *American Heavens: Religion, Race, and Reconstruction in California* (Berkeley:

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<sup>9</sup>John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>10</sup>Elliott West, "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 6–26, reprinted in West, *The Essential West: Collected Essays* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 100–127. The standard

University of California Press, 2012).

One could even extend analysis to the entire North American West in the era of state consolidation. Mormon historians have produced studies of “the colonies” in Alberta and Juárez, but they have not attempted a comparative tri-national (Canada-U.S.-Mexico) study that draws on literatures of state power, immigration, citizenship, race, religion, and marriage, following the lead of Canadian historian Sarah Carter’s *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008). Further inspiration can be drawn from Anne Hyde’s award-winning *Empires, Nations & Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), which discusses Mormons alongside Natives, Mexicans, Anglo-Americans, and various groups of Métis.

We need more books like *Pioneer Prophet* for more reasons than one. Too long has the trade market in western Mormo-Americana been monopolized by non-historians—e.g., Sally Denton’s *American Massacre: The Tragedy at Mountain Meadows, September 1857* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), Jon Krakauer’s *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of a Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), and David Roberts’s *Devil’s Gate: Brigham Young and the Great Mormon Handcart Tragedy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008). If we professional historians don’t write readable histories, professional writers with different scholarly standards will do it for us.

That said, I’m not sure that Utah or even the “Mormon Culture Region” as defined by Donald Meinig (1965) should be the default geographic unit for the next generation of Mormon historians interested

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literature on Utah Territory’s rocky road to statehood also includes Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960); Donald R. Moorman with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992); David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America’s First Civil War, 1857–1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011); Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1986); and David L. Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1998).

in the North American West.<sup>11</sup> Ethan R. Yorgason has nicely narrated the regional story up through 1920 in *Transformation of the Mormon Culture Region* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003). We could use a follow-up, but the story in the mid-to-late twentieth century might be less about one coherent region than three zonal relationships: (1) the core and its inner periphery (the urban Wasatch Front and rural intermountain counties); (2) scattered U.S. metro areas where a Mormon minority possesses disproportionate power in local politics (including Boise, Seattle, Sacramento, San Bernardino-Riverside, Orange County, San Diego, Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Honolulu); and (3) certain Pacific island territories with strong religious and diasporic connections to Utah (e.g., Somoa, American Somoa, Tonga).

Many worthy topics await the next generation. In addition to making the global comment that the whole post-polygamy era remains grossly understudied, I wish to highlight four research areas:

- *Women*. Given the unusually abundant archival sources that record the lives of western Mormon women, the continued dominance of male lives in the historiography is frankly appalling. The prevailing modes for discussing women are still documentarian and descriptive. Thanks to Utah State University Press, many excellent female pioneer diaries have been transcribed, edited, and published, and Paula Kelly Harline's *The Polygamous Wives Writing Club: From the Diaries of Mormon Pioneer Women* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) has made this genre accessible to a wider audience. Mormon historians (mostly women, it must be said) have written any number of fine biographies of notable sister Saints—e.g., Martha Sonntag Bradley and Mary Brown Firmage Woodward's *Four Zinas: A Story of Mothers and Daughters on the Mormon Frontier* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000) and Carol Cornwall Madsen's *An Advocate for Women: The Public Life of Emmeline B. Wells, 1870–1920* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 2006). A handful of autobiographies such as Annie Clark Tanner's *A Mormon Mother* (1941; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Library, 1973) have become classics. But social histories of ordinary Mormon women, not to mention large-scale interpretive works that use gender as the primary category of analysis, are still relatively un-

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<sup>11</sup>D. W. Meinig, "The Mormon Culture Region: Strategies and Patterns in the Geography of the American West, 1847–1964," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 55, no. 2 (June 1965): 191–220.

common. It seems plausible that the LDS Church's repeated high-profile acts of antagonism toward feminists has had a dampening effect on historical inquiry into the varieties of female spirituality within Mormonism as well as the role of Mormon women in Utah's public sphere. Martha Sonntag Bradley's *Pedestals & Podiums: Utah Women, Religious Authority, and Equal Rights* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005) cries out for a host of companions. Ironically, perhaps, the most prominent Mormon-themed gender studies monograph—D. Michael Quinn's *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996)—is primarily about Utah men. The foundational scholarship on the plural wife system was likewise more about husbands, though Kathryn M. Daynes's award-winning *More Wives than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001) did much to rectify the situation. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's forthcoming book promises a lot, but she and other female historians of women need help from the predominantly male membership of the MHA. It should also be said that the full history of LDS women in Utah must also include intersecting networks of non-Mormon women (and men), as suggested by Pascoe's *Relations of Rescue* and Jeffrey D. Nichols's *Prostitution, Polygamy, and Power: Salt Lake City, 1847–1918* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

• *Environment(s)*. The field remains wide open, though I discern some basic debates. On the historical existence and importance of a Mormon environmental ethic, you can triangulate from John B. Wright's *Rocky Mountain Divide: Selling and Saving the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), Dan L. Flores's *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), and Marcus Hall's *Earth Repair: A Transatlantic History of Environmental Restoration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), plus several important essays by Thomas G. Alexander. On the place of religion in irrigation, you can contrast Donald Worster's *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) and Mark Fiege's *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). On the role of religion in contemporary debates over federal lands in Utah, you can compare Stephen Trimble's *Bargaining for Eden: The Fight for the Last Open Spaces in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) and Jedediah S. Rogers's *Roads in the Wilderness: Conflict in Canyon*

*Country* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013). Nonetheless, there is no single “go-to” book on the history of Mormonism and the environment, nor any in-depth studies on topics such as animals, air pollution, weapons of mass destruction (including the proposed MX missile program), and land-use zoning. We desperately need a scholarly book on the role of the LDS Church as property holder, real estate broker, land developer, and landscape architect in the U.S. West and beyond. The history of the LDS built environment is even less studied than the considerable impact of Mormons on the “natural” environment.

• *Violence*. Historians have not yet settled the question whether Utah Territory in the Brigham Young era was more or less or simply differently violent than other western settlement zones and periods. D. Michael Quinn and Will Bagley have made provocative assertions, but some enterprising historian with a knack for cliometrics as well as legal, religious, and textual analysis will have to settle the matter. The problem is both larger and more elusive than the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Todd M. Kerstetter’s *God’s Country, Uncle Sam’s Land: Faith and Conflict in the American West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006) is an intriguing if not always satisfying attempt to identify the underlying causes for violent conflicts between new religious movements and federal officials across time and space in the U.S. West, starting with Latter-day Saints and ending with the Branch Davidians. Daniel Justin Herman’s *Hell on the Range: A Story of Honor, Conscience, and the American West* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010) is the best existing model for discussing the interplay of Mormonism and western violence. Herman takes a seemingly small episode, “Arizona’s Rim Country War”—a conflict later simplified and popularized by Zane Grey—with its complicated mix of participants (Mormon settlers, Texas cowboys, New Mexican shepherders, Jewish merchants, mixed-blood ranchers) and turns it into a meditation on the past and present conflict between two powerful American values: honor and conscience. In addition to *Hell on the Range*, Mormon historians would do well to read Blackhawk’s *Violence over the Land* and Deborah and Jon Lawrence’s *Violent Encounters: Interviews on Western Massacres* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011) for regional and comparative perspectives on violence.

• *Indigenous peoples*. It is discouraging, to say the least, that we’re still waiting for a scholarly overview of the LDS-indigenous relationship

from the Book of Mormon through the Indian Student Placement Program and the Polynesian Culture Center. Dozens of worthy topics for theses, dissertations, and monographs await students of the “Lamanites” and the “Children of Lehi.” Scott R. Christensen’s *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822–1887* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1999) is a good example of the surprising and quite often disturbing source material that awaits narrative and analysis. Mormon historians who take on indigenous topics should consider borrowing from the tool-kit of ethnohistory. By that I mean considering historic Native *and* historic Mormon populations anthropologically. Mark P. Leone’s *The Roots of Modern Mormonism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979) remains useful (despite certain inaccuracies) for the way it defamiliarizes pioneer Saints, who should be considered—if we’re honest as historians—almost as foreign to twenty-first-century Mormons as Shoshones, Utes, Goshutes, Paiutes, or Navajos of the nineteenth century. Greater engagement with ethnohistory would help LDS scholars avoid the mistakes of John Alton Peterson’s *Utah’s Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998)—a valuable book weakened by credulous and literal readings of Mormon documents about Natives. The sources available at the Church History Department, the National Archives, and the new Utah American Indian Digital Archive are wonderfully rich and sadly underutilized. In an array of publications, Robert S. McPherson has done a heroic job recovering the intertwined histories of Navajos, Utes, and Mormons in San Juan County.<sup>12</sup> There is no comparable scholar for the rest of Utah. In *Fire on the Plateau: Conflict and Endurance in the American Southwest* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1999), Charles F. Wilkinson touched on the unethical record of Mormon lawyers and businessmen in Navajo and Hopi country in the post-World War II era, and R. Warren Metcalf in *Termination’s Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002) did the same for Northern Utes. Further investigation is warranted. The assimilationist programs of the LDS Church and its Native members need scholarly attention. Research on the “other” indigenous Mormons of the Far West—Pacific Island-

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<sup>12</sup>See, among other works by Robert S. McPherson, *Comb Ridge and Its People: The Ethnohistory of a Rock* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009), and *Navajo Tradition, Mormon Life: The Autobiography and Teachings of Jim Dandy* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012).

ers—has advanced with Hokulani K. Aikau’s flawed but valuable *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai’i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012) and Matthew Kester’s exemplary *Remembering Iosepa: History, Place, and Religion in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). Kester’s book is simultaneously translocal (Iosepa, West Valley City, La’ie), trans-regional (U.S. West, Oceania), and transnational. By following the paths of missionaries and converts to and from indigenous homelands like New Zealand, Tonga, and Samoa, Mormon scholars can find understudied topics that link to trending themes in academia: Pacific history, bilingualism, U.S. neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism, race and citizenship, religion and politics, immigration and diaspora.

At the risk of sounding self-promoting, I’ll conclude with a brief discussion of my own book *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008). Admittedly it’s hard to classify—a history of place and displacement, of place-making and memory-making; a cultural and environmental biography of Mount Timpanogos (and its foil, Utah Lake); a history of Provo; an account of Mormon-Ute relations in Utah Valley; a telling of the post-polygamy transformation of Mormonism vis-à-vis recreation; an analysis of collective memory among Utah Mormons; an examination of Mormon sense of place in Utah; and a deep contextual history of “playing Indian” (in the genres of place-names, legends, and stage performances) across the American landscape.

The greatest challenge and reward of writing *On Zion’s Mount* involved the concept of scale. I wanted to write an extra-local history that worked on multiple levels, including the local (Utah Valley) and the bioregional (the Great Basin); the territorial/state (Utah) and the ethnogeographic (the Mormon Culture Region); and finally the sectional (the U.S. West) and the national (the United States). Ultimately I devised multiple parallel narratives to cover these different scales. Of all of them, I probably say the least about the western region, even though I was trained as a western historian. In part that reflects the success of the New Western History. Thanks to scholars such as my mentor, Richard White, I didn’t have to argue for the significance of U.S. West (including Utah); rather, I was arguing for the significance of local Utah history (including its Mormons and its Natives) for the history of the United States and other settler societies. In addition to

decentering the early settlement history of Utah (away from Salt Lake Valley and toward Utah Valley), I endeavored to write a post-western history that contextualized Utah in national trends more than regional ones.

My book, whose starting point is Mount Timpanogos, looks at landmarks in the East and Midwest, and puts local history in a large framework, for the simple reason that everyone in the world engages in place-making and memory-making. Although *On Zion's Mount* focuses on Latter-day Saints, I strategically avoided the title Mormon historian (which may help explain why the *Journal of Mormon History* didn't review it).<sup>13</sup> I accept that my book is too idiosyncratic to serve as a model for most Mormon historians, but nonetheless I hope it can serve as an inspiration.

Having completed *On Zion's Mount*, I'm convinced that the memorable "doughnut hypothesis" of Jan Shipps (2000) needs revising.<sup>14</sup> If the history of the American West really is a doughnut, and if the Great Basin really is the center, then Mormon Utah is not an empty hole but a creamy filling. Behaving like old-line Protestants, most non-Mormon historians have avoided the sugary center by eating around it, while most Mormon historians have gone straight for the sweet white stuff. It's past time for a fast and an offering. Despite some terrific recent scholarship, the MHA overall has yet to realize the promise of the now not-so-New Western History—with its emphases on gender, race, class, and environment, and its greater inclusion of women and non-whites—even as western historians have added newer approaches, notably transnational and transborder history.

Writing in the closing days of the Second World War, Maurine Whipple anticipated that wartime changes would permanently alter the relationship between Mormons and their western homeland: "Zion has exchanged her horns for the American Dream. Zion has married America at last, and the union is enduring as Timpanogas [sic] or the Rainbow Bridge. . . . Utah people are no longer Mormon

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<sup>13</sup>*Editor's note: A review will appear in the spring 2015 issue.*

<sup>14</sup>Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 9, 21, 24, 34.

or gentile. They are Americans.”<sup>15</sup> That was wishful thinking. Or perhaps Whipple was simply ahead of her time. Mormon regionalism is slowly but surely waning; LDS demographic supremacy in Utah will not last forever; and the growth of the Church in other regions and nations will continue to stretch Mormonism beyond the shadows of the everlasting hills. Mormon historians approach a crossroads. Imagine if they took the unfamiliar road home.

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<sup>15</sup>Maurine Whipple, *This Is the Place: Utah* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 214–15.