

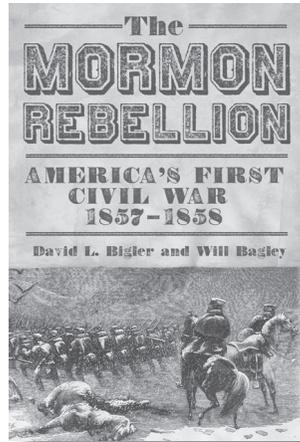
## Book Reviews

DAVID L. BIGLER and WILL BAGLEY. *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857–1858*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011, xv + 392 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, \$34.95 hardcover.)

*Reviewed by Brent M. Rogers*

One might be surprised at the dearth of history written on the fascinating episode known as the Utah War. Since 1958, only a handful of historical monographs have attempted to understand the struggle between the United States federal government and the Mormon community in the large Great Basin territory.<sup>1</sup> In this sprawling narrative account, David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, both independent historians who have produced significant work on Great Basin and Mormon history, offer a reinterpretation of the Utah War by challenging the heroic history of Mormon self-defense that has permeated the topic's historical memory. The provocative title slightly belies the scope of the book, as much of the story told within its pages occurs before and slightly after the time frame indicated. Nevertheless, the title makes clear the authors' perspective: a Mormon theocracy breathed defiance at and ultimately rebelled against the federal government, which resulted in a regional civil war. The authors present innumerable fascinating details and an interesting story. However, they also make many unsubstantiated or confusing claims that mar this study.

Bigler and Bagley cast a critical eye on the Mormon world-view and position their narrative in a framework of the Mormon millennial belief system. In fourteen fast-moving chapters they engage numerous topics, largely chronologically. Beginning with Joseph Smith's introduction of theocratic governance, the authors present a multitude of stories and incidents involving Mormon attempts to gain statehood, the handcart disaster, the Mormon



Reformation, Brigham Young's bombastic and inflammatory rhetoric, Mormon efforts to create alliances with Native Americans, and President James Buchanan's decision to send the army to establish its presence in Utah—all to build their case and demonstrate Mormon rebellion. Bigler and Bagley masterfully recount details and fascinating stories of violence in the territory, including an entire chapter on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, legal affairs, and military logistics on both sides. They do well to depict the relationship and efforts of the Mormons to curry favor with area Native Americans to establish an alliance (279–80). Since the authors posit that the Utah War was ultimately beneficial to both sides, they are absolutely correct to point out that, following the arrival of the army in Utah, James H. Simpson's topographical corps developed new transportation and communication routes as the war's most tangible benefit (328).

The overarching theme of this book is the incompatibility of theocratic and republican governing systems (8–9). In this fresh interpretation the authors argue that the two governing systems cannot coexist without conflict. The federal government acquired new territory, like the Great Basin in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, with the intent to make that land part of the Union as a state or several states. Territories were designed to go through a process of tutelage as they became equal states in the Union. However, no new state could gain admittance without a republican form of government under Article IV of the Constitution. Bigler and Bagley indicate that the Mormons, especially their leader and Utah Territory's governor, Brigham Young, thought they were operating the ideal republican form of government in listening to the will of the territory's people (142). However, Young's combined role as civil and religious leader appeared theocratic from the outside and became detrimental to obtaining statehood for Utah. With territorial status, the federal government had the final authority over Indian affairs, land issues, and official appointments. In addition, all territorial legislation ultimately had to gain Congressional approval, which Young labeled "odious and anti-republican" or an "absurd system" of colonialism (82–83). As the Mormon community made efforts to become an equal, sovereign state in the Union, their perceived theocracy prevented them from gaining that status and proved that the two governing systems would not function together.

Mormons indeed desired a sovereign position, as Bigler and Bagley posit. However, in chapter 4, "A Terror to All Nations: The Crusade for Sovereignty," the 1856 Mormon statehood campaign takes center stage and creates confusion as to the type and extent of sovereignty sought. What becomes muddled in this work is whether the religious community desired sovereignty as a state in the Union or as an independent nation. The authors vacillate between and often conflate Mormon efforts at obtaining statehood

with ideas of Mormon universal dominion, or creating the Kingdom of God. Further complicating the matter of designs for Mormon sovereignty is the January 6, 1858 petition from Mormon Utah lawmakers, in the midst of the Utah War, asking for “rights of sovereignty afforded to states,” and their “CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS” to remain in the Union. Bigler and Bagley read this as a marker of independence, a document designed to fulfill “God’s purpose in inspiring the Constitution’s framers to establish a land of religious freedom where His Kingdom could be restored and supersede its parent as it prevailed to universal dominion” (268). It seems contradictory to say that this petition seeking inclusion into the Union with state sovereignty was in fact fulfilling the objective of Mormon universal dominion. The authors’ contention leaves the reader to wonder why Young would lead a rebellion in pursuit of total national independence if he and his fellow Church leaders wanted status as a sovereign state. The authors further offer an incongruous claim that “Young had deliberately rebelled against the authority of the United States and intended to adopt a sovereign position as either a state of the Union or an independent nation, even if it took bloodshed to do it” (283). If he led a blood-filled rebellion against the federal government, it seems unlikely that the Mormon community would ever gain state sovereignty. Ultimately, the authors, in their efforts to depict Mormon rebellious objectives, fail to analyze or differentiate between state sovereignty and independent national sovereignty.

*The Mormon Rebellion* occasionally offers insufficient source criticism. According to the authors, James Buchanan “intended to assert U.S. sovereignty” in Utah Territory and not provoke a conflict (3). He did want to impose federal authority on a “defiant territory” because of the numerous reports received from Utah federal officials which indicated that a republican form of government was absent in the territory. Bigler and Bagley highlight the various reports received by the federal government which they maintain demonstrated Mormon rebellion. One document in particular is an “unwise and ill-timed” defiant memorial from Utah Territory that lists grievances with former territorial officials and supplies a list of approved candidates for various government posts. The authors assert that this memorial “did more to bring on the United States Army than all the complaints of federal appointees” (105). They offer this claim, but provide questionable source material and little analysis to back their assertion. In their portrayal, Utah delegate John Bernhisel presented the memorial to the president on March 18, 1857, two weeks after his inauguration, but Buchanan did not read it and instead sent it to Interior Secretary Jacob Thompson. The authors brand this document a “Mormon nullification doctrine,” while Thompson apparently indicated it was “a declaration of war.” Thompson appears to have met with Utah’s congressional delegate, Bernhisel, and told him that it “breathed

a defiant spirit,” and allegedly inquired if the Mormons “intended to set up an independent Government” (106–07). The authors, however, do not inform the reader of what Thompson actually said, only what Bernhisel said he said (107). As a source they cite a letter from Bernhisel to Brigham Young that recounts the meeting. Bernhisel’s letter may be the best source available, but the authors have not qualified the source, nor indicated how the meeting between the Utah delegate and the Secretary of the Interior influenced the decision to send the army to Utah. The authors expect the reader to accept their claim, but the reader is left wondering if Thompson ever met with the president on this memorial, or if he had any influence with the president on Utah affairs. From their brief two-page discussion of this seemingly crucial document, it is unclear how this memorial did anything to “bring on the United States Army.” If this is in fact the key document that led to the Utah War, more documentation from the federal perspective and a deeper contextual analysis by the authors is required.

In the chapter on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Bigler and Bagley also make unsubstantiated and contradictory claims. The authors label the massacre a terrorist action and maintain that Brigham Young purposefully directed it “to strike fear into the hearts of intruders,” and to demonstrate his power to sever the transcontinental overland lines of travel and communications. The authors further assert that “at Mountain Meadows, Brigham Young served notice to the rest of the nation that he would defend with arms the sovereignty of God’s Kingdom in the West as it opened its march to universal dominion” (179). This conclusion is contradicted earlier in the text when the authors suggest that Young did not report or investigate the massacre, and “as far as he was concerned, it was a non-event” (155). It makes little sense that Young ordered a massacre to serve as a notice of his power to the rest of the nation and then did not report it to anyone outside Utah and made great efforts to conceal the event. Nevertheless, the authors do present some provocative questions about the Mountain Meadows atrocity. For instance, after detailing James Haslem’s ride from Southern Utah to Salt Lake City to ask Young what to do about the emigrants, they ask why Southern Utah’s leaders did not wait for Young’s orders (174)? Perhaps they allude to an answer later in this study, though in a different context, when they suggest that Young was not as absolute in authority as perceived (271).

Bigler and Bagley have produced an interesting narrative account of the Utah War, published by a respected press of Western American history that deserves a close reading. It is clearly provocative and fascinating, although readers must think critically through some of the unsubstantiated claims and contradictions in the text. Despite the flaws in the book, the authors have opened up this episode to further investigation. As the authors suggest, read-

ers will draw different conclusions about this story. With this study as a new launching point, the Utah War should become better understood as students of history investigate the claims and sources that these authors present to grow this exciting historiography.

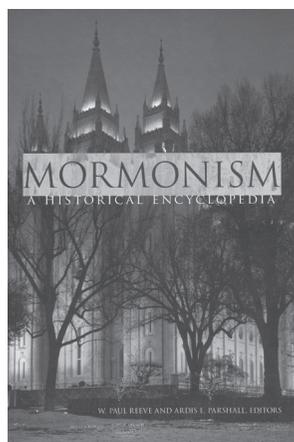
1. See William P. MacKinnon, *At Sword's Point, Part I: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Donald R. Moorman, with Gene A. Sessions, *Camp Floyd and the Mormons: The Utah War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992); Norman F. Furniss, *The Mormon Conflict, 1850–1859* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960); Leroy R. Hafen, ed., *The Utah Expedition, 1857–1858: A Documentary Account of the United States Military Movement under Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, and the Resistance by Brigham Young and the Mormon Nauvoo Legion* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1958); reprint, LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, eds., *Mormon Resistance: A Documentary Account of the Utah Expedition, 1857–1858* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

Brent M. Rogers (brentrogers2121@gmail.com) is a historian for the Joseph Smith Papers in the LDS Church History Department and a PhD candidate in nineteenth century U.S. History at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

W. PAUL REEVE and ARDIS E. PARSHALL, eds. *Mormonism: A Historical Encyclopedia*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010, xxviii + 449 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, \$85.00 hardback.)

*Reviewed by Keith A. Erekson*

*Mormonism: A Historical Encyclopedia* carves out a unique place in the field of encyclopedias on Mormonism. Though it contains biographical entries for forty-one “people” (some are groups, like the Three Witnesses), it breaks from a long tradition of exclusively biographical encyclopedias. The book treats six “eras” and thirty-one “events” from the history of Mormonism, but it does not sever the past from recent events, such as a controversial general conference talk or a modern presidential candidate. It also examines twenty-three “issues,” but does not address them in chronological or alphabetical order. And, at just under five hundred pages, it is not a multi-volume,



Church-sponsored attempt to document all aspects of Mormon history, theology, and practice.

So what is *Mormonism*? At its most basic level, the volume presents 101 entries about things related to Mormonism and its history. Breaking from encyclopedic tradition, the entries are not arranged alphabetically but are grouped into eras, events, people, and issues. The editors confess that the book “does not pretend to cover all things Mormon” (ix). Readers seeking information on BYU football statistics or Mormon celebrities will have to look elsewhere. Furthermore, the editors tried to maintain their focus on “Mormon history, not doctrine” (ix), explaining perhaps why there is an entry for “Priesthood Revelation of 1978” but not priesthood, or for “LocalWorship,” but not soteriology. The biography section includes all of the presidents of the LDS Church, as well as selected General Authorities (George Q. Cannon, Bruce R. McConkie, and James E. Talmage), women (Martha Hughes Cannon, Patty Sessions, Barbara B. Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and Emmeline B. Wells), and scholars (Leonard Arrington, Juanita Brooks, and Hugh Nibley). All entries, the editors affirm, “maintain a historical focus” (ix).

The rub in this volume is that the English word *history* bears several distinct meanings, from the events that happened in the past, to systematic historical inquiries, to writings about the findings of those inquiries. The fact that not all entries invoke the same meaning of history gives the volume an uneven feel. For example, the opening entries on historical eras all provide narratives about the Mormon past that are generally chronological and principally “factly”—names, dates, events, and so on. Sometimes the chronology does not work. For example, the entry titled “Conflict: 1869–1890” focuses almost exclusively on anti-polygamy legislation and leaves conflicts with Indians in the West, the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and the Utah War to the more benignly-named era of “Exodus and Settlement: 1845–1869.” The entries on people and events likewise devote most of the space simply to describing what happened. The organization of some of the entry titles is also confusing. “Nauvoo Legion,” the “Book of Mormon,” and “Youth Programs” are all categorized as events, which bears practical implications in that the entries provide scant attention to the history of the use of the Book of Mormon, or to the changes to youth (and other) programs over time. Given the brevity of the volume, some entries appear repetitive: “Colonization” and “Pioneering” or “Polygamy” and “Manifesto” and “*United States v. Reynolds*.” Other entries almost neglect context entirely. The “First Vision” discusses Joseph Smith and the various accounts of his theophany, but not visions of others on the contemporary religious scene. While the Church’s “Correlation” program became adopted in the 1960s, no mention or reference is made regarding similar changes in other global or multi-national organizations,

corporations, or institutions. The entry on the “Smoot Hearings”—like all Mormon history work before it—does not explain why Theodore Roosevelt and his contemporaries stepped in to help the Mormon Apostle.

The editors are correct in characterizing the “Issue” essays as being “the most exciting aspect of this volume” (x). Jason Smith’s essay on “Divergent Churches” is an oddly titled but excellent catalog of the various schisms, reorganites, restorationists, dissenters, and fundamentalists that make up Mormon history. The essay by Margaret Blair Young and Darius A. Gray on “Mormonism and Blacks” summarizes their past work succinctly with a keen eye to context—pointing out the irony that although the LDS Church restricted the priesthood to Black males, its members met in uncharacteristically integrated congregations. Armand L. Mauss’s essay on “Mormonism and Race” places Brigham Young’s 1852 declaration on race within the political context of Utah’s territorial ambitions and Mormon racist ideas within the broader European and Protestant traditions. Andrea G. Radke-Moss’s essay on “Mormonism and Women” takes her subject well beyond polygamy and ERA to uncover “an ongoing conflict between the expectations for Mormon women’s traditional and nontraditional roles,” which ranges from those of the earliest converts in 1830 to the conference address of the current Relief Society general president (358). David Clark Knowlton’s essay provides a succinct and enlightening summary of the scholarly literature by sociologists and historians since the 1980s who have debated whether or not to consider “Mormonism as a World Religion.” “Polygamy,” by Kathryn M. Daynes and Lowell C. “Ben” Bennion, provides a clear and succinct summary of both the practice and its fallout within the context of other marriage systems. How unfortunate that the section on “Issues” ends abruptly with the letter P!

This volume is, of course, Latter-day Saint centric. Sidestepping both academic “Restorationist Studies” and journalistic waffling over the breadth of applicability of the word “Mormonism,” the writers assume that Latter-day Saints constitute the norm. All the entries on “Mormonism and . . .” treat Latter-day Saints by default. Those familiar with LDS history will be able to turn to “Ungathered” when they do not find an entry on “Gathering”; and they will understand the difference between the event “Organizing the Church” and the issue “Church Organization.” The volume may prove particularly appealing to LDS Gospel Doctrine teachers who want to step outside the manual but still find a friendly voice from a nationally legitimate publisher. Hopefully, all who are interested in Mormonism and its histories will turn to the “Issue” essays to find the real gems that summarize the work of established scholars and provide solid reviews of the literature by younger scholars.

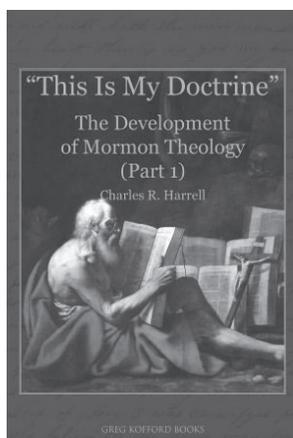
KEITH A. EREKSON (kaerekson@utep.edu) is an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at El Paso, and the author of *Everybody's History: Indiana's Lincoln Inquiry and the Quest to Reclaim a President's Past* (2012).

CHARLES R. HARRELL. *"This is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology*. (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2011, xi + 583 pp., bibliography, index, \$34.95 hardcover, \$25.78.)

*Reviewed by Benjamin E. Park*

The history of Mormon theology has long been a point of interest. Especially since the advent of New Mormon history, scholars have been fascinated with the development and progression of LDS thought from Joseph Smith to the current prophet, especially as it relates to Mormonism's broader culture. Was there a change in how Mormons conceptualized deity? How did Joseph Smith's understanding of matter relate to that of contemporaries like Unitarian Joseph Priestly? Did the Campbellites influence how early Mormonism understood salvation and restoration? Was the LDS mode of scriptural hermeneutics unique or redundant in the *sola scriptura* environment of antebellum America? These and numerous other questions enliven many scholarly debates.

Charles Harrell's recent *"This is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology* falls neatly in line with this tradition. The purpose of the book is to explore different doctrinal topics, including themes as clear as "God the Father" and as abstract as "The Gospel Plan," and explain how they compare and contrast in primarily five different settings: the Old Testament, the New Testament, nineteenth-century Christianity, early Mormonism, and contemporary Mormonism. "This book," Harrell declares in his first chapter, "examines how LDS doctrines taught today were understood in early Mormonism and even earlier biblical times" (12). After a general introduction to "theology," *This is My Doctrine* breaks into twenty chapters based on specific doctrinal topics, and each chapter is further broken into subtopics that discuss how that topic differed during different periods.



The book is primarily a grouping of various thematic sections, is heavily dependent on the work of other scholars, and can principally be viewed as a compilation of what modern experts have said on various scriptural and religious topics over the last century. Indeed, “encyclopedic”—by which I mean a gathering of many disparate topics and opinions in the format of short discussions and entries rather than a driving narrative or argument—is perhaps the best description of this book’s approach. There are a few benefits of this format. First, it can serve as an easy reference text for specific questions: if one desires to know what the Old Testament taught of the resurrection, or how Mormonism’s belief in the Holy Ghost compares to that of other nineteenth-century Christians, all they would have to do is turn to the designated chapter. Second, such an approach feigns the possibility of comprehensiveness: the book presents itself as capable of tracing beliefs over several millennia and countless thinkers—all in the space of five hundred pages! In a modern era dominated by similar internet-based sources like *Wikipedia*, it is easy to see why an encyclopedic format can be desirable.

Yet there are a number of severe problems with this format (not to mention many problematic interpretations). In this review I will focus on only three major restraints that result from the book’s overall methodology. First is Harrell’s problematic use of secondary literature. Because the text relies so heavily on other scholars’ opinions—most dramatic points are made through secondary quotations, and several sections end with the final word coming from other historians—it is often difficult to determine what, exactly, Harrell’s contribution is to the topic at hand. It often seems Harrell understands his role more as a facilitator of others’ conclusions rather than the author of his own. Harrell seems to hide behind the credentials of those whom he is quoting: frequent invocations of authority—like “James Charlesworth, a professor of New Testament language and literature at Princeton University” (18), or “BYU religion professor Thomas Wayment”—saturate the text, perceivably as a way to assure the reader that these interpretations are authoritative.

Further, I often find Harrell’s invocations of numerous scholars to be problematic in his selective use of their research. Especially in, but not limited to, the book’s introduction, Harrell cites numerous scholars ranging from Adam Clarke to Paul Hansen, from Karen Armstrong to Mark Noll, and even from Anthony Hutcheson to Kevin Barney, in a rhetorical way that implies all agree on a specific approach to “theology”; in reality, the larger frameworks in which these scholars work would seldom mesh in a way that would correlate to the picture Harrell paints. Most graduate students who take courses in either biblical studies or historical theology would have trouble recognizing these classic arguments as portrayed in this book.

The second major problem with Harrell's approach points to another poignant irony. The book's subtitle proclaims "the development of Mormon doctrine," but very little *development* is actually presented within the book itself. Because of the text's encyclopedic approach, what the reader gets are static snapshots of various periods—especially early and contemporary Mormonism. We learn what Mormons seemingly believed in 1830, and then what they believe today, but we never really see what got Mormonism from 1830 to today. Further, the book's format downplays the heterodoxy within each individual group or period, making it seem that all Mormons believed the same thing during the Kirtland period, or, perhaps even more problematic, that all nineteenth-century Christians subscribed to the same tenets of faith. The historical record reveals both Mormonism and Mormonism's context as much more vibrant and divergent than presented in *This is My Doctrine*.

And finally, the third problem with the book's approach is its inability to argue a specific message. It succeeds in showing that Mormonism has had a "complicated and confusing" interpretation of scriptures (55), but it never explains what made that misinterpretation important. Why does it matter that Mormons believed one thing concerning God in the 1830s, and another in the 1840s? What does it mean that the Kirtland-era Mormons shared beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit with those of contemporary Evangelicals? In most cases, the book seems more content with debunking Mormon interpretations of the scriptures than actually engaging what those interpretations meant both for them and for us (see, for example, pages 23, 118, 128, 149, 177, 203, 275–81, 346–58, and 399–401).

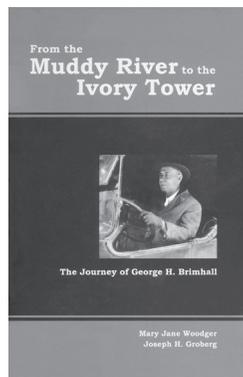
In the end, *This is My Doctrine* falls short of succeeding as a robust overview of Mormonism's theological development, in part due to its specific interpretations and in larger part due to its limiting framework. Its approach and interpretation of how Mormon theology developed lacks the sophistication or academic rigor required in understanding this ever-important topic.

BENJAMIN E. PARK (Benjamin.e.park@gmail.com) is a PhD candidate in cultural, religious, and intellectual history, primarily in America and the Atlantic world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, at the University of Cambridge. He received a bachelor's degree in English and history from Brigham Young University, and master's degrees in historical theology from the University of Edinburgh and intellectual history from the University of Cambridge.

MARY JANE WOODGER and JOSEPH H. GROBERG. *From the Muddy River to the Ivory Tower: The Journey of George H. Brimhall*. (Provo: BYU Studies, 2010, xxvi + 245 pp., appendix, illustrations, index, \$18.95 hardback.)

*Reviewed by Brett D. Dowdle*

Drawing upon personal letters, diaries, sermons, and a variety of other sources, *From Muddy River to the Ivory Tower* traces the life and educational career of George H. Brimhall, who served as president of Brigham Young University from 1904–21. As the president of the Church’s flagship school, Brimhall was one of Mormonism’s most influential educators during the first two decades of the twentieth century. While most of the book focuses on Brimhall’s contributions to BYU, it also includes insights into Brimhall’s youth, family life, Church activities, and his controversial death in 1932. Mary Jane Woodger and Joseph H. Groberg thus introduce a new generation to a largely forgotten man.



Although the book could be termed a biography, its unstated purpose seems to be an attempt to explain Brimhall’s involvement and actions in BYU’s 1911 controversy over modernism and the teaching of evolution in the school. While biographical information is found throughout the book, most of it somehow relates to Brimhall’s complicated views on education and religion, thus helping to explain his participation in the decision to discontinue the employment of the University’s three most highly educated professors in 1911. The chapters on Brimhall’s earlier life experiences all build toward the chapter on the controversy.

The authors attribute both Brimhall’s love of learning and his devotion to Mormonism to his parents. His mother gave him a copy of the Book of Mormon to teach him how to read, while his father founded a short-lived school in Ogden to shield Mormon youth “from the influences of [Johnston’s] army” (5). These first experiences with education served to combine reason and faith in a way that would influence Brimhall for the remainder of his life. His experience in his father’s school was particularly important. The institution taught him that schools served multiple purposes as institutions of both education and social control.

Among the most significant aspects of the book is the discussion of Brimhall’s consistent concerns for both the academic and spiritual welfare

of his students. In the tradition of Karl G. Maeser, Brimhall served as a mentor and father figure for most of the students at BYU. Using numerous examples of Brimhall's efforts as a mentor and counselor, the authors help the reader to understand the depths of Brimhall's concern for his students. At the same time, the book notes his unflinching efforts to develop the university into a legitimate academic institution, including his determination to attract professors with advanced degrees from prestigious universities. As a part of his efforts to develop the university's spiritual academics, he urged the professors to develop their understanding of modern science in order to bring about "a harmony between science and religion" (67–68).

Brimhall's two main concerns, however, did not always mesh with each other. While the authors attribute the hiring of the Joseph Peterson and Ralph Chamberlin to Brimhall's efforts to increase BYU's academic standing, they likewise argue that the firings of these professors were, at least in part, attributable to his constant concerns to protect the faith of his students. To their credit, the authors openly address the angered reactions of students and faculty alike to Brimhall's decision to fire the professors, as well as Brimhall's justification of the action. Regardless of the reader's opinion on the handling of the 1911 controversy, Woodger and Groberg have made an important contribution to our understanding of the event by helping the reader to better appreciate how the event fit into the spectrum of Brimhall's life.

While the examination of Brimhall's role in the modernism controversy is a vital contribution to Mormon educational history, it precludes a detailed examination of many other aspects of his life. Most strikingly, the book devotes very little space to his post-1911 life and contributions, despite the fact that he continued to work in prominent educational positions for the last twenty years of his life. Additional research into topics such as Brimhall's work during the 1920s as an administrator and mentor for the burgeoning seminary program would have deepened our understanding of the beginnings of that important Church institution while at the same time contributing to the book's focus on his life as an educator.

While some aspects of Brimhall's life are underdeveloped, the book does include some valuable and straightforward discussions of a few of the more delicate aspects of his life, such as his first wife's mental illness, his disputed post-manifesto plural marriage to Alice Louise Reynolds, and his controversial death/suicide in 1932. As a member of the Brimhall family, Groberg in particular is to be commended for his willingness to address these sensitive issues. Far from decreasing the reader's estimation of George Brimhall, these topics enhance the reader's view of his humanity.

In terms of readability, one bothersome aspect of the book is the inclusion of several sidebars containing short articles on subjects that are only indirectly

related to Brimhall's life. Although these sidebars contain valuable information, their placement in the middle of the book's chapters is distracting. As the book currently stands, the reader must either stop reading in the middle of the chapter or come back to the sidebar after finishing the chapter. As a result, the layout of the sidebars almost wholly negates the value of the information they include. While the intent was to provide the reader with additional information on lesser-known topics, the sidebars mostly serve to detract from an otherwise interesting narrative. If the information could have been woven into the narrative and the footnotes, it would have proved far more valuable.

*From the Muddy River to the Ivory Tower* is an insightful glimpse into the context of Mormon education's most controversial debate. Although the book is far from the definitive evaluation of the 1911 controversy, and while many would disagree with its interpretation of the affair, it is a valuable addition to our understanding of twentieth-century Mormonism. It is to be hoped that other authors will follow suit and add to the growing body of literature on twentieth-century Mormonism and some of its lesser known individuals and leaders, including Mormonism's women and ethnic minorities.

BRETT D. DOWDLE (brett.dowdle@gmail.com) is a PhD student studying American History at Texas Christian University. While a graduate student at BYU he worked as a historical researcher for the "Education in Zion" exhibit. His master's thesis is titled "'A New Policy in Church School Work': The Founding of the LDS Supplementary Religious Education Movement, 1890–1930."

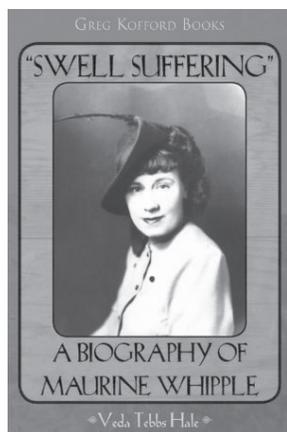
VEDA TEBBS HALE. *"Swell Suffering": A Biography of Maurine Whipple*. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011, xiii + 457 pp., \$31.95 cloth.)

*Reviewed by Gary Topping*

Veda Tebbs Hale has given us a splendid biography of a very unpleasant person, Mormon novelist and writer Maurine Whipple. Although lacking in prior experience in writing history or biography, Hale steers a sure course between Whipple's immense literary talent on the one side and her whining self-justifications, manipulations, and scapegoating on the other. One could argue that Whipple has gotten a better biographer than she deserved.

It is true, though, that her masterwork, *The Giant Joshua*, widely regarded as the greatest novel based on Mormon history and culture, earned for her a firm place in Utah literary history. The novel is a panoramic narrative of St. George,

Utah, in the pioneer period, based on some of Whipple's own ancestors, its greatest strength being its profound empathy for Mormon culture and the pioneer experience. In fact, Hale compares it to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*, which appeared only a few years before Whipple's book, as a consummate fictional summation of a culture. Whipple herself, as Hale portrays her, was an unconventional Mormon, not a regular church participant, whose dogged commitment was to what she distilled as the essence of Mormonism, the "Grand Idea" of amelioration through group effort. Her great novel is a protracted hymn to that concept.



*The Giant Joshua* was originally conceived as the first volume of a trilogy that narrated the development of that "Grand Idea" from the pioneer period to the present. Over time, the scale of that expansive project became unmanageable, so Whipple shortened it to a one-volume sequel, but even that proved beyond her ability, and the grand literary scheme remains an unfinished monument.

Why? Hale offers several explanations. While Whipple was anything but lazy, she was easily distracted, and she was unable to find another editor like Houghton Mifflin's great Ferris Greenslet, whose unique mixture of encouragement, flattery, and prodding kept his difficult young writer on track for *The Giant Joshua*. Also, she was rarely able to find a comfortable physical environment in which to write. Even when she did, after Greenslet got her a fellowship to the Yaddo writers' colony, she feuded with the director and accomplished little if anything. Finally, she was perpetually impoverished and felt compelled to pursue futile careers in magazine and screen writing to support herself.

Perhaps even more to the point, Hale shows Whipple wasting valuable writing time scribbling scolding protests to editors who rejected her work, love letters to a lengthy line of men she was always falling for, only to see them flee her smothering possessiveness, and seemingly perennial defenses against various neighbors, false friends, and the Mormon Church for persecutions real or imagined.

With the exception of her effective employment of the Whipple papers, Hale has a penchant for relying on secondary sources where primary materials are available, like Levi Peterson's biography of Juanita Brooks. Fortunately, Peterson's book is so reliable that no problems seem to have crept into Hale's

interpretations. Similarly, Hale seems unaware of the Dale Morgan papers at the Utah State Historical Society, but they would have given her little more than some disparaging quotations about Whipple's character, and she already had plenty of those.

One great service rendered by this biography is a fresh reading of Whipple's neglected nonfiction essay on her native state, *This is the Place: Utah* (1945). Entertainingly outspoken and critical, it is of course outdated today, besides the fact that it perpetuates nearly every cliché ever invented about Utah and the Mormons. But like Wallace Stegner's *Mormon Country* (1942), it gives an idea of what Utah was in the 1940s.

Since Maurine Whipple's heyday in the 1940s, many excellent novelists have arisen to offer fictional interpretations of Mormon history and culture. Within that enlarged field, though, one can make a case that Whipple's *The Giant Joshua* still reigns supreme. For those who have never experienced that classic work, it is imperative to do so at the earliest moment. Following it up with Hale's biography will only deepen the pleasure.

GARY TOPPING ([gary.topping@dioslc.org](mailto:gary.topping@dioslc.org)) is archivist-historian for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City. He has formerly been curator of manuscripts at the Utah State Historical Society and is a retired professor of history at Salt Lake Community College. He has published widely in Utah historiography, Utah Catholic history, and the history of the Colorado Plateau.