



Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

Volume 12 | Number 1

Article 10

2000

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Eliason, Eric A. (2000) "“An Awful Tale of Blood”: Theocracy, Intervention, and the *Forgotten Kingdom*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 12 : No. 1 , Article 10.

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FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title “An Awful Tale of Blood”: Theocracy, Intervention,
and the *Forgotten Kingdom*

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Reference *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 95-112.

ISSN 1099-9450 (print), 2168-3123 (online)

Abstract Review of *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847-1896* (1998), by David L. Bigler.

“AN AWFUL TALE OF BLOOD”:
THEOCRACY, INTERVENTION, AND THE
FORGOTTEN KINGDOM

Eric A. Eliason

The Scope and Goals of *Forgotten Kingdom*

David Bigler's *Forgotten Kingdom* identifies a largely overlooked yet potentially hot historical topic—"the most singular form of government ever to exist in North America" (p. 15). With clear organization and engaging prose, *Forgotten Kingdom* sets out to tell the little-remembered story of the federal campaign against Deseret theocracy as a background to help general readers, and non-LDS newcomers to Utah in particular, understand "the state and how it became the way it is" (p. 18). Bigler interprets the history of this effort using as his analytical framework Americans' common self-congratulatory/self-deprecating conception of their own history. According to Bigler, the "Americanization of Utah" was undertaken by people whose imprudent excesses had good intentions. Their endeavor to make Utah a better place succeeded "almost in spite of itself" (p. 16). However, despite the suggestion of Bigler's subtitle, *Forgotten Kingdom* offers more to a reader interested in a laudatory account of the exercise of federal power in Utah than it does to a reader looking for an in-depth investigation of LDS theocracy.

Review of David L. Bigler. *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1998. 411 pp., with bibliography and index. \$21.95.

While Bigler's conversational style, occasional mention of admirable actions by certain individual Mormons, and nods to Brigham Young's leadership genius make the book read like congenial local history, its focus and interpretive methods pass a strong critical judgment on the Mormon experience. *Forgotten Kingdom* portrays the tiny "Mormon Kingdom" as an illegal conspiratorial pseudogovernment in need of reconstruction into proper American ways by the firm hand of benevolent federal intervention (see p. 364). Following the lead of nineteenth-century commentators and twentieth-century scholars such as Thomas Alexander and Leo Lyman, Bigler's approach of conceptualizing the period of 1847–96 as that of a theocracy in conflict with federal reformers is not without merit.¹ However, Bigler's thesis that the "Americanization of Utah" was a step ahead for "individual freedom and self-rule" is perplexing in the light of Mormons' great loss of religious freedom, civil rights, and self-determination during the era this book covers. These losses established legal precedents used to restrict the civil rights of others as well.² Fully understood, it is difficult to imagine how the tragic nineteenth-century federal campaign against Latter-day Saints has in any way advanced American liberties or civil government.

Issues of Interpretation

Bigler claims that previous historians, presumably LDS ones, have been "too close to the events [of Utah history] to treat them without bias" (p. 16). If this is the case, Bigler does not correct bias so much as invert it. Below, I focus on five of several possible key examples where *Forgotten Kingdom's* assertions apply a seemingly inequitable bias or go contrary to established understandings of well-scrutinized historical patterns. In every instance, Bigler's interpretive choices paint an unfavorable portrait of Latter-day Saints.

1. See Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), and Edward L. Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

2. See John T. Noonan Jr., *The Lustre of Our Country: The American Experience of Religious Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 6, 32–33.

Impartiality in Interpretation

Forgotten Kingdom seems to display a problematic interpretive bias in the opposing ways in which it interprets specific similar historical events. In cases where Mormon actions might seem questionable, the worst possible interpretations are often given and Mormons are condemned. In cases where the actions of federal officials might seem questionable, the best possible motives are often assumed and Bigler provides friendly justification. Below are a few examples.

First, even though Mormons were struggling pioneers with few resources who did not request the services of a federal survey expedition, Bigler condemns what he considers the less-than-enthusiastic manner in which Mormons brought to justice the Native Americans who massacred Lt. John Gunnison and his survey team (see pp. 82–84, 89–92). Bigler is dismissive of Mormon attempts to work with Native American understandings of justice—an effort he calls a “charade” (p. 90). Yet Bigler excuses Colonel Patrick Edward Connor’s total inaction while Black Hawk was on the warpath against vulnerable Mormon settlers in southern Utah even though the main purpose of the army in the West was to protect settlers (see p. 240). Bigler speculates (without criticism) on Connor’s motives as follows: “Connor no doubt took some satisfaction in refusing to risk the lives of his soldiers to defend inhabitants he believed had refused to support his own command. Besides, he had another campaign in mind. . . . This new crusade was aimed at the heart of the Kingdom of God” (p. 240).

Second, Bigler makes little attempt to give a fuller understanding of the fears and motives of the Mormons involved in the Mountain Meadows Massacre, and he fully accepts the designation “Circleville Massacre” for a tragic event where Mormons killed sixteen Indian war captives.³ Yet Bigler again makes a special effort to downplay the troubling nature of Colonel Connor’s actions at the Bear River Massacre, where as many as three hundred men, women, and children were shot down by Connor’s California Volunteers (see pp. 229–31).

3. See John A. Peterson, *Utah's Black Hawk War* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1998), 246.

Colonel Connor personally conceived and led this operation. It is remembered by the historians and the Shoshone still today as one of the most brutal army atrocities ever committed against Native Americans.⁴ Nevertheless, Bigler portrays this event as an execution of a legitimate military campaign. He euphemistically suggests that it continue to be called the “Battle of Bear River” (p. 228).

The problem with such a portrayal can be illustrated by imagining what would happen if a Mormon historian were to suggest that the Mountain Meadows Massacre be called the “Battle of Mountain Meadows.” Bigler’s description below of the Bear River Massacre could just as easily describe the Mountain Meadows Massacre by substituting “Fancher party” for “Indians.”

The fight Connor led has since been called either a battle or a massacre, perhaps depending on one’s point of view, but in fact it was both, first a pitched struggle with no quarter asked and none given, followed by a one-sided slaughter. Connor was also accused of indiscriminately killing non-combatants and allowing his men to rape native women, but such charges are difficult to verify and even harder to square with his character. (p. 231)

This benefit of the doubt on account of character is extended despite the fact that Connor was known to have refused to protect besieged settlers and circulated unfounded and damaging rumors about Mormons in his newspaper the *Union Vedette*.⁵ The atrocities committed at Mountain Meadows are also difficult to square with the character reputations of those thought to be at the scene, yet no similar benefit of the doubt is extended to them (see pp. 159–80).

The point here is not that history should not hold individual Mormons accountable for Mountain Meadows and Circleville. Rather, the point is that historical memory of accountability and moral questioning should be equitably applied to similar situations regardless of whether the perpetrators belonged to the Nauvoo Legion or the U.S. Army.

4. See *ibid.*, 3, 33, 35, 76, 184.

5. See *ibid.*, 37.

Third, Bigler's choice of sources in describing the violence that resulted from the Morrisite affair is also perplexing. In 1862, LDS police authorities, including Robert T. Burton, tried to free hostages held by Morrisite schismatics from the LDS Church. Bigler admits that the many accounts of the shooting that occurred are contradictory and incomplete. Yet after hinting (with no evidence provided) that LDS Church leaders were preparing to massacre the Morrisites as soon as the army left, he zooms in on an account of the event that could hardly be more unfavorable to Mormons. He justifies his choice with only the following: "Middleton's is probably as good as any of the contradictory versions of this tragedy. After the Morrisites had surrendered, Burton rode into the fort with a number of his men and personally shot Morris to death with a revolver at close range" (p. 213).

Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre

Few events in pioneer Mormon history have consumed more ink than the Mountain Meadows Massacre. While there is no denying local-level Mormon involvement in this tragedy, the reasons that it happened are complex. (However, it seems very clear that it never would have happened at all had Utahns not regarded themselves as being in a state of war with the United States—a state of war *not* initiated by the Mormons.)

Anti-Mormon writers have long sought to demonstrate a causal link between Brigham Young and the Mountain Meadows Massacre, but in over 140 years of trying, nothing has turned up. Since Juanita Brooks's conclusions in *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, most historians, Mormon and gentile, recognize that it seems very certain that he was not involved and was devastated when he learned of it.⁶

Nevertheless, *Forgotten Kingdom* strongly hints, without providing any new evidence, that Brigham Young was not only involved but was a direct instigator. Bigler points to a meeting of Piede Indian chiefs with Brigham Young a week before the attack; Piedades were later

6. See Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (1950; reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 219.

known to be among those involved in the massacre. Bigler also refers to Brigham Young's instruction not to harm the Fancher party as an "alleged" order. This loaded term "alleged" is not applied by Bigler in any discernibly evenhanded way and appears rarely throughout the book and never in conjunction with any questionable action of any gentile. The word's use here seems designed to prejudice the reader against Brigham Young and to suggest that the memory of this instruction was fabricated after the fact to protect the church president (p. 170).

Law and Violence

One of *Forgotten Kingdom's* most provocative features is the general sense it conveys of Mormondom as a violent vigilante society with little sense of normal law. Bigler lays—through speculation more than documentation—at unseen Mormon vigilantes' feet a litany of unsolved murders and ostensible attempted murders.⁷ His selection of crimes to which he gives extended treatment appears to focus only on those that can be interpreted as serving the purposes of Brigham Young's ostensible imperial designs.

This portrayal goes counter to the accounts of contemporary observers and the understanding of historians who have investigated the matter of crime in nineteenth-century Utah. In fact, if anything distinguished Deseret from elsewhere in the West, it was its reputation for well-established and fair courts (administered by LDS bishops) and a remarkably low level of violence—vigilante, criminal, or otherwise.⁸

Gentile travelers such as British explorer Richard Burton and U.S. Army surveyor Lt. John Gunnison observed that murder and general lawlessness were rare in Utah compared to elsewhere in the

7. To name just a few, Bigler, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 131–33 (the murder of apostates Parrish and Potter); 148–50 (the alleged attempted murder of federal agent Garland Hurt); 202 (shots fired at Associate Justice H. R. Crosby); 213 (the killing of schismatic Joseph Morris); 247–53 (the murder of public land preemptor Dr. John King Robinson and harassment and possible attempted murder of four others is given a whole chapter).

8. See Dale L. Morgan, *The State of Deseret* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1987), 7–27.

West. Burton noted, "During my [three-week] residence at the Mormon City not a single murder was, to the best of my belief, committed: the three days which I spent at Christian Carson City witnessed three."⁹ The presence of well-run courts and the low levels of violence were attributable to a large degree to the ideal of a just and covenant society that the Latter-day Saints were trying to build. The places in Deseret where lawlessness and murder occurred at higher rates tended to be those areas such as army camps and mining towns where Mormons' presence and influence were less pervasive.

While Bigler's chronicle of one strange killing after another laid at the "Danites" feet makes for exciting anecdotal reading, it does not square with the overall picture of history. Legal historian D. Michael Stewart underscored this when he remarked, "extralegal violence was rare compared to that found in other frontier communities."¹⁰ The singular awfulness of the Mountain Meadows Massacre has overshadowed the general tenor of Mormon official and individual restraint during this period and left a distorted impression of the era in many people's minds.

Again, the point here is not to claim that no vigilante crimes by angry Mormons protecting their interests ever occurred in territorial Utah. The point is that overattention to such activities obscures the fact that they were very rare compared to elsewhere in the West, where no concerted effort to undermine a popularly supported government was going on as in Utah.¹¹

9. Richard F. Burton, *The City of the Saints and Across the Rocky Mountains to California* (New York: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1861), 248.

10. D. Michael Stewart, "The Legal History of Utah," in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan K. Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 323.

11. While the relative lack of violence in Deseret seems to be very well established and most likely the result of Mormon influence, some historians have argued that what violence did occur was also the result of Latter-day Saint influence—specifically a "Mormon culture of violence." The most forceful and lucid advocate of this interpretation can be found in D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 226–61. Critics of Quinn have suggested that his evidence is anecdotal rather than statistical, that he tends to suggest the most sinister possible interpretations for events for which there is scanty documentation, and that his portrayal does not adequately account for the loyalty and affection Mormons extended to their leaders. See, for example, Richard Ouellette, "Mormon Studies," *Religious Studies Review*

Democratic Process and Deseret Government

Related to Bigler's accusations of lawlessness is his assertion that the Mormon theocracy corrupted the democratic process by "tampering with elections" (p. 313), depriving its citizens of the "right to cast their ballots in secret" (p. 214), and resisting the development of national political parties. This accusation is presentist in its failure to fully describe the alternate system employed by Mormons and to account for the historical context of American politics at the time. It should be remembered that the first secret ballot elections in the world were held in the colonies of South Australia and Victoria, Australia, in 1856. The implementation of this idea spread gradually, and secret ballots were by no means universal in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Not until the Progressive Era was voting fully transformed from a public display of social affiliation to a matter of private cognitive choice.¹² Even today secret ballots are not universally applied to all democratic processes. The elected officials in representative democracies such as ours still usually vote openly.

The Mormon system was neither as far removed from a representative democracy nor as out of sync with mid-nineteenth-century democratic practices as Bigler depicts. It was in fact a distinct way of running government that could be considered even more just and egalitarian. Mormons used a "cooperation, and consensus" rather than an adversarial model of civic participation.¹³ Leaders who (ac-

25/2 (1999): 161–69. Nevertheless, even Quinn tempers his "culture of violence" theory with comments considering the degree to which they had been persecuted, such as "It would be the worst kind of distortion today to criticize Mormons of the past for harboring profound bitterness toward persons who 'acted' or 'sounded' anti-Mormon" (Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 241–42), and "Mormon culture's missteps are on a far smaller scale than those of other religious cultures" (Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, ix).

12. For an analysis of the evolving conceptions Americans have had concerning appropriate democratic practices and for an investigation into why the people in colonial and mid-nineteenth-century America thought differently about such issues as secret ballots, an informed electorate, social voting, and voting as an identity group, see Michael Schudson, "Voting Rites: Why We Need a New Concept of Citizenship," *American Prospect* 19 (fall 1994): 59–63, 66–68. See also Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

13. Stewart, "The Legal History of Utah," 323.

ording to scriptural church policy) could be removed by the voice of the people twice a year were usually entrusted with much decision-making responsibility. Ideally, all sides of any local issue got a full hearing, and “voting” was done not as an exercise of individual power but as a public sign of assent to a foregone agreement. Variations of this governmental model are still used in many small communities today, and it is still highly regarded by many political philosophers. Consensus and cooperation are seen as especially appropriate for the kind of small-scale agricultural communities in which Mormons lived. As described in Michael Zuckerman’s *Peaceable Kingdoms*, nineteenth-century Mormons strove for a kind of “other-oriented” community ethic similar to that—but minus the religious intolerance—of their eighteenth-century New England forefathers.¹⁴

Mormon resistance to the incursion of American political culture is especially understandable given the atmosphere of widespread political corruption that characterized American governmental processes at the time. This was the era of graft, coercion, and kickback-riddled political machines like Tammany Hall. One of the official symbols of the Whig party at the time was the whiskey barrel. The barrel indicated the reward that the party often gave its voters right at the ballot box.¹⁵

Dale L. Morgan, a scholar who has never been accused of being a Mormon apologist, said the following of those who criticized Mormon authority in territorial Utah:

Opponents usually failed to take into account the specific trust of the Mormons in their leaders, and the sense of responsibility held by the leaders to ward their people—a conception of inter-responsibility and mutual faith, which was

14. Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1970), vii.

15. Mormon suspicion of the American political system on the grounds of the factious nature of political parties and corruption in elected officials has been part of Mormon political thought at least since the publication of Joseph Smith’s presidential platform; see *General Smith’s View of the Powers and the Policy of the Government of the United States* (Nauvoo, Ill.: John Taylor, Printer, 1844).

certainly a more vital ethical relationship than is ordinarily observed between governors and governed.¹⁶

In other words, the Mormon hierarchy was less of a form of autocratic despotism than it was a legitimate expression of the people's popular will.

Again the point here is not that there was no dissatisfaction with government among Mormons and gentiles in Utah. The point rather is that there were few places at the time and probably ever in history where government enjoyed such popular support among the majority of the people. It is certainly understandable that white Protestants accustomed to enjoying the privileges U.S. society provided them chafed at their relative political powerlessness in Utah. However, they *did* have the right to vote and as far as political minorities go, few had as powerful a friend as Utah gentiles had in the federal government.

Finally, it is worth noting that if one accepts the legitimacy of Deseret's political authority, one must also accept that Deseret had the right to ensure the security and public safety of its citizens and protect its interests against hostile outside influences just as any other legitimate governmental authority would. Unfortunately, Deseret had to accomplish this task under the watchful eye of anti-Mormon propaganda writers. Any attempt to maintain order, apprehend and punish criminals, or protect legitimate interests would be spun as criminal despotism. That Deseret's authorities were able to maintain order and control crime at all under these conditions, let alone achieve the peace and stability that they did, is an impressive feat.

The Legality of the State of Deseret

Bigler states clearly in his introduction and implies throughout *Forgotten Kingdom* that there was something somewhat seditious and extralegal about Utahns' attempts to organize and maintain a proto-state government parallel to territorial administration while the region sought statehood (see pp. 15–18, 141, 201–6, 363–68). According to Bigler,

16. Morgan, *The State of Deseret*, 12–13.

For some fifty years this militant millennial movement engaged in a continuing struggle for sovereignty with an American republic that never quite knew how to take the challenge. In the end, the more irresistible of two incompatible systems proved to be the one founded on ideals of individual freedom and self-rule. (p. 16)

However, except for the strength and focus of their religious motivations and their tradition of well-coordinated social organization, Mormon efforts were not unique. The 1787 Northwest Ordinance spelled out how territories would be organized and admitted into the Union but was purposely vague on the exact relationship between local and federal authority. Thus, according to Western historian Charles S. Peterson, in the path to statehood “conflict, challenge, variety, confusion, and inefficiency often resulted,”¹⁷ and “dreams of empire, provisional states, and local initiative” were part of the political climate of American westward expansion.¹⁸ In American history, several other locally initiated self-governing movements flourished in places where little functioning state or local authority existed. Five other full-blown “protostates” attempted self-creation, although only California was successful in this endeavor. None of these other states were condemned as disloyal or were invaded by the army for taking this kind of initiative.¹⁹

The creation and maintenance of the State of Deseret before and after territorial organization was not an act of surreptitious rebellion; it was a sign of American hopefulness in the spirit of the times. The best case for legal irregularity and obstructionist activity in the story of the State of Deseret is not in its existence, but rather in the failure of the United States to admit it to the Union. The Northwest Ordinance stipulated sixty thousand people as a minimum population for statehood—a requirement Deseret had been able to meet for decades before 1896.²⁰

17. Charles S. Peterson, introduction to Morgan, *The State of Deseret*, xiii.

18. *Ibid.*, xiv.

19. See Morgan, *The State of Deseret*, 7–8.

20. See Peterson, introduction to Morgan, *The State of Deseret*, xii–xiv.

While much is made of the theocratic nature and sense of divine calling of Deseret government, Bigler gives little sense of how thoroughly the mainstream nineteenth-century American culture was energized by millenarian hopes and a sense of America's rightful apocalyptic purpose at the center of world history.²¹ Of course, the nascent American millennial kingdom confidently regarded itself as more moderate and committed to personal freedom than Mormons were. However, while Protestant Americans were free to practice their religion in the "Mormon Kingdom," Mormons were not free to practice their religion in the Protestant vision for a Christian America. If, as Bigler says, the "American" system was the more "irresistible" choice, it was not so by the power of persuasion and attractiveness to Utah's people. It was irresistible because it was imposed by the raw power of the military, deputy marshals, and a federal government committed to stripping Mormons of their civil rights. It is difficult to see how the following coercive actions, legitimized by what Circuit Court Justice John T. Noonan calls "a mass of intolerant legislation,"²² can be characterized as "founded on ideals of individual freedom and self-rule," as Bigler suggests, or in any way contributing to America's traditions of civil democracy and freedom of conscience.

Under the direction of Chief Justice Charles S. Zane, the federally appointed Utah Commission arrived in Utah to broadly enforce the 1882 antipolygamy Edmunds Act. They posted flyers announcing substantial rewards for information leading to the arrest of polygamists and sent federal marshals fanning out across the territory, breaking up families and throwing 1,035 Mormon men as well as a few women into jail. Rather than risk incarceration for their convictions, many families fled to newly established Mormon colonies in Mexico and Alberta.

In Utah, federal marshals and paid informants participated in the systematic surveillance of polygamous households, the disrupt-

21. For an overview of the nineteenth-century Protestant vision of a Christian America, see Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

22. Noonan, *Lustre of Our Country*, 32.

tion of worship services, the tailing of Latter-day Saints going about their business, and late-night, no-knock home invasions in which men were pummeled and dragged from their beds and off to prison. In 1886, a deputy marshal shot and killed Edward M. Dalton in Parowan as he tried to escape capture for the misdemeanor offense of unlawful cohabitation.

In 1887, the Edmunds-Tucker Act abolished female suffrage in Utah and authorized the administration of loyalty oaths to prospective voters, jurors, and officeholders. The act stipulated compulsory attendance of witnesses at trials, overturned common law in compelling wives to testify against their husbands, and disbanded the church's fund for bringing foreign converts to Utah. The act's most devastating provision legally disincorporated the church and provided for the seizure of all its assets in excess of \$50,000.

The Utah Commission gerrymandered territorial districts to ensure election victories in Salt Lake City and Ogden for the minority anti-Mormon Liberal party. In early 1890, the Supreme Court declared constitutional an Idaho law barring *all* Mormons from voting whether or not they believed in or practiced plural marriage. Congress neared almost certain passage of the Cullom-Strubbe Bill, which was designed to disenfranchise the church's entire U.S. membership—the first and only such attempt at total disenfranchisement of an entire religion in American history. Enacting the provisions of the Edmunds-Tucker Act, federal agents began confiscating church property and blocking access to meetinghouses and temples.

The Utah Commission had made the LDS Church into an outlaw organization and Utah into a nearly totalitarian state under a marshal law that was hostile to the majority of the territory's inhabitants. This campaign only began to ebb when Wilford Woodruff announced a cessation of plural marriages in 1890. Utah gained statehood in 1896 only under the condition that polygamy be "forever banned" and the Mormon preferred name Deseret be abandoned in favor of the gentile preferred name Utah.²³

23. Much of the information in this sketch of federal action against Mormons is well-known to historians, but I relied on Thomas G. Alexander's *Utah, the Right Place: The*

The Morality of Deseret's Suppression: The "Twin Relics"—Siblings or Polar Opposites?

Defending Deseret's autonomy may sound similar to the appeals to popular sovereignty the Southern States used during and after the Civil War to protect slavery and segregation. Indeed, *Forgotten Kingdom* echoes much nineteenth-century political thought in portraying antislavery and antipolygamy efforts as emerging from the same reformist impulse and enjoying the same moral mandate.²⁴ However, while antipolygamy and antislavery campaigns may have shared some of the same spirit and rhetoric of Victorian Protestant sensibility, their methods, effects, and moral basis were almost diametrically opposed. There are fundamental differences between the first and second "relic of barbarism" and the regional governments that protected them.

In the South the slaves were in bondage; they were the least enfranchised people in the country. Their African religious expressions were suppressed, and their Christian expressions forcibly channeled and constrained. The slaves were held down by the complex and effective exercise of threats and applications of physical terror—a system that survived in modified form long after it became illegal to own another person.²⁵

On the other hand, unlike in the South and contrary to popular literary stereotypes, no systematically organized posses chased after those who decided to leave Utah and plural marriage.²⁶ Rather than

Official Centennial History (Salt Lake City: GibbsSmith, 1995), 186–204, to refresh my memory.

24. See, for example, the preface of A. G. Paddock, *The Fate of Madam La Tour: A Story of the Great Salt Lake* (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1881), 366, which touted itself as doing "for Mormonism what 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' did for Slavery." Harriet Beecher Stowe equated the antipolygamy crusade with antislavery in her introductory preface to Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, *"Tell It All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism* (Cincinnati: Queen City, 1874), vi.

25. On historical understandings of American slavery, see, for example, Peter J. Parish, *Slavery: History and Historians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). On the religious situation of slaves, see Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

26. See Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mor-

compelling people to stay, Brigham Young on several occasions invited dissatisfied Mormons and gentiles to leave the territory. Many apparently took up this offer and left for the California gold fields or elsewhere.

Rather than being disenfranchised by Deseret, Mormon women, the alleged victims of “polygamic theocracy,” were on the cutting edge of female suffrage in the United States. They were the first American women to vote in municipal elections.²⁷ In Deseret before “Americanization,” Mormon women were more free to practice their religion and exercise their political rights than anywhere else in the United States. That Mormon women overwhelmingly practiced plural marriage as a religiously motivated personal choice is forcefully stated in their own publications.²⁸

A central piece of the effort to establish full federal hegemony in Utah was to strip women of their franchise in order to reduce Mormon political power—an effort condemned by national feminist leaders such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In addition, not only polygamist men but *all* Mormon men were to be disenfranchised. Federal action subjected the majority of Utah’s populace to imprisonment and harassment, making them less free to practice their religion and exercise their civil rights. Mormons did not demand a level of religious tolerance that they were not willing

monism in Nineteenth Century American Literature,” *Western Humanities Review* 22/3 (1968): 243–60.

27. Seraph Young was the first woman to vote after the passage of the Utah State suffrage bill. Alexander, *Utah*, 180.

28. For a general overview of Mormon defenses of plural marriage, see “Blessings of the Abrahamic Household,” in B. Carmon Hardy, *Solemn Covenant: The Mormon Polygamous Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 84–126, and David J. Whittaker, “Early Mormon Polygamy Defenses,” *Journal of Mormon History* 11 (1984): 43–63. For female defenses of polygamy, see Helen M. Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph: A Reply to Joseph Smith, Editor of the Lamoni (Iowa) “Herald”* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882). See also Helen M. Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage: By a “Mormon” Wife and Mother* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884). Claudia L. Bushman, ed., *Mormon Sisters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Emmeline, 1976), provides a number of essays that give insight into the political and social views of women regarding polygamy and feminism. See especially Stephanie S. Goodson, “Plural Wives,” 89–112, and Judith R. Dushku, “Feminists,” 177–98.

to extend to others. Deseret law required, and Brigham Young forcefully advocated, religious freedom for everyone. According to tradition, he even set aside land for Salt Lake City's Catholic cathedral.

It is ironic that this time period is often referred to as the "Americanization of Utah." People are not "Americanized" by taking away their most American of rights—the right to vote, the right to free exercise of religion, and the right to be free from unreasonable seizure and imprisonment. In sum then, Southern Reconstruction sought to *expand* the civil rights and freedoms of an oppressed minority while the "Americanization of Utah" *constricted* the civil rights and freedoms of an oppressed minority. They were different endeavors entirely.

This critique of the morality of the suppression of Deseret is not presentist revisionism. The principles by which Deseret might have been allowed to flourish unmolested were well understood and have had powerful defenders throughout American history. Before being tempted by the French offer to sell Louisiana, Thomas Jefferson believed that the westward expansion of Americanism did not require the westward expansion of the United States government. Instead he imagined sovereign and autonomous sister republics filling up the West, each of which would work out American ideals in their own slightly different ways. He imagined Indian nations as sovereign states along these lines when he sent Lewis and Clark to contact them and open up trade routes to the Pacific.²⁹ It is not inconceivable that the deeply Americanist vision of the citizens of Deseret could have fit into Jefferson's vision of North America.

Later, in the 1850s and 1860s, gentile observers as diverse as Mark Twain, influential U.S. Army surveyors Howard Stansbury and John Gunnison, English explorer Richard Burton, and New York reporter Horace Greeley doubted accusations of Mormon rebelliousness. While none of these observers agreed with Mormon doctrines, they all advocated leaving Mormons alone. These gentile observers

29. See James P. Ronda, *Lewis and Clark among the Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1–26, 85.

claimed that calling for anti-Mormon legislation was the province of demagogues. They further warned that compelling essentially loyal Mormons to conform would be a prescription for bloodshed.³⁰

The Challenge to Contemporary Mormon Studies

Despite these problems, *Forgotten Kingdom* does make some important contributions. As Bigler rightly suggests, a chronicle of the establishment and dismantling of Latter-day Saint theocracy in the American West is long overdue. Many Mormons' historical consciousness stops in 1847 as if the arrival of the pioneers in Utah were the end of history. Bigler invites us not to ignore the fascinating 1847–96 era. For this we should thank him. However, there are some signs of this era's reemergence as an important time period in LDS historical consciousness. At the September 1999 fundraiser for the Association for Mormon Letters, keynote speaker Richard Bushman suggested that because of our experience with federal intervention and domination, Mormons now exist in a state of mind that shows many features of a postcolonial condition.³¹ Drawing on the work of Palestinian scholar Edward Said, Bushman described ways in which colonized peoples begin to accept the image of themselves constructed by their colonizers.³² Said and Bushman invite us to be cognizant of this colonization of our minds.

30. See John W. Gunnison, *The Mormons, or, Latter-day Saints, in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake: A History of Their Rise and Progress, Peculiar Doctrines, Present Condition, and Prospects, Derived from Personal Observations during a Residence among Them* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Grambo, 1852), 154–57. Howard Stansbury, *An Expedition to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah; including description of its geography, natural history, and minerals, and an analysis of its waters: with an authentic account of the Mormon settlement* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1852). Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1872; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1980), 91–102. Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey from New York to San Francisco: In the Summer of 1859* (New York: Saxton, Barker, 1860), 209–28. Burton, *City of the Saints*, 224–494.

31. See Richard Bushman, "The Colonization of the Mormon Mind," in *The Annual of the Association for Mormon Letters, 2000*, ed. Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Association for Mormon Letters, 2000), 14–23.

32. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

The fact that many Mormons today fail to celebrate our ancestors' courageous, principled, and amazingly well-disciplined non-lethal defense of local autonomy, noncontentious governmental operation, communitarian living, cooperative economics, personal religious freedom, and family privacy—and instead shamefacedly avoid engaging with our theocratic past—may indicate that we have internalized the ideology of our colonizers. David Bigler's stirring the coals of this secret-shame-that-shouldn't-be is a wake-up call to those who engage in Mormon studies to rise to the challenge of appreciating the historical meaning and current implications of our theocratic past.