Corrections Included in Second Printing

Book collectors always want the first edition. But the later editions often have corrections, so authors prefer that you read later editions. Actually, sometimes first editions have egregious mistakes (either through carelessness of author or proofreader, or through weird gremlins that inevitably bedevil the editorial/printing process), and of course, collectors prize those editions for their lovely mistakes. Authors, of course, find something a bit perverse in that. As it turns out, I was able to make a few minor corrections in the second printing of *In Sacred Loneliness* (which appeared in approximately late February or early March, 1998). However, if you have the first edition, you can enter these corrections in your copy, thus having the best of both worlds.

If you don't know which edition you have, the easiest way to check is by looking on p. iv. In the middle of the page, after the copyright notice, if you have 6 5 4 3 2 1, you have the first edition. If you have 6 5 4 3 2, you have the second edition. Also, the seated women on the cover (Zina Huntington Young, Emily Partridge Young, and Eliza R. Snow Young) are much more visible on the second edition cover, because there were technical difficulties in the first edition.

1. p. xi: line 4: add "early Mormons" after "celebrate"; change "that" to an em-dash, so it reads: "celebrate early Mormons in a responsible, balanced way—all of its characters"

2. p. xv: Sillitoe should be Sillito

3. p. xv: four lines down from Sillito: add "always" after "me to". So it should read: "always shoot the sheriff"

4. p. 6, #21: "Woodward," not "Woodard"

5. p. 82, line 9: "new coat" should be underlined, not italicized

6. p. 115: 5 lines from bottom: "Capt" should be underlined, not italicized

7. p. 209, first line: add "but" after "matter."

8. p. 259, heading for VI. "Jabez", not "Jabeez"

9. p. 338: next to last full paragraph, 4th line: add ", Wells wrote," after "Mother Whitney" So it should read: Mother Whitney, Wells wrote, "was quite

10. p. 340: ten lines from top: add "will" after "they" It should read: "On the other hand, they will remember"

11. p. 349: first full paragraph, second line: change "marriage" at the end of the line to "union"

12. p. 524: middle of first full paragraph: change "few days of attacks" to "few days of them"

13. p. 575: line 10 from top. excise "visit" (it should read: "walked with Zina to Willard's grave")

14. p. 579: second paragraph of section II., 8th line. excise first "so" (it should read: "version often entailed"
15. p. 599: second full paragraph, 8th line: put accent over last e of attaché.

16. p. 619: 2nd line. change "Nancy (Young)" to "Nancy Greene"

17. p. 629: The first words following the section titles should actually be the first bolded word in the following paragraph. I.e., "Geneology", "Bushman" and "Anti-polygamy novels" should be the first words in their paragraphs, not in the heading.

18. (Same thing: 634, 636, 637.)

19. p. 629: "Geneology" should be changed to "Genealogy"

20. p. 630: middle of page, in section "women leaving polygamy": change "Jeffrey" to "Jeffery"

21. p. 644: toward end of section III., 8th line up: change "previous" to "last". It should read "Compare Introduction, last section"

22. p. 645: section V., 10th line. again, change "Jeffrey" to "Jeffery"

23. p. 673, heading: the last "t" in "Pickett" needs to be changed


27. p. 778: add p. 254 to (Kimball), Mary Fielding (Smith)
AGNES COOLBRITH


ELIZABETH DAVIS

I have excerpted the following from Ron Romig's Missouri History web page (see my links section). It provides added background on Elizabeth's expulsion from Missouri and return to the Missouri area.

The late Arthur J. Brackenbury of Independence recalled that his grandmother, Elizabeth Brackenbury, lived there at the time of the expulsion.

"She lived on a 10-acre tract on the Blue, where Centropolis now is," Mr. Brackenbury said. "It was in November when she was driven from her home, and she and a son spent their first night with only a corn-shock as shelter."

With several other families, they went out the old river road north of Independence and crossed the river at the Wayne City landing. On the Clay County side, shelters were prepared by propping willows against a sycamore log, and the exiles remained there the rest of the winter.

FATHER IN EXPULSION

Mr. Brackenbury's father, John W. Brackenbury, was 6 years old at the time of the expulsion. He later moved to California, where Mr. Brackenbury was born in 1861.

The idea always was to return to Independence, Mr Brackenbury said. We came back in 1876, by covered wagon from San Bernardino to Salt Lake City. We waited there a year for the Union Pacific railroad to be finished, and we chartered the first boxcar that ran from Ogden to Omaha. It cost father $1,000 to move his family and household goods. Brackenbury recalled that the rail trip was delayed two days at Cheyenne when the wood-burning locomotive ran out of fuel. The trip was made by river boat from Omaha to White Cloud, Kans., and by covered wagon from White Cloud to Independence.

[Further information on the return of RLDS Saints to Independence, starting in 1867, at the abovementioned site.] The Kansas City Sunday Star November 20, 1938, page 10 A, col. 1

Editor's [Ron Romig's] Note: The Union Pacific Railroad was completed to Promontory Point north of Salt Lake in 1869. The Brackenbury family stayed in White Cloud, Kansas for several years before going on to Independence, Missouri in 1877. [William J. Curtis family research - John Brackenbury's letters to the Herald]

Zina Diantha Huntington (Jacobs Smith Young)
I would like to thank Lorin Hansen and Clark Goble for sharing the following with me:

Diary of Caroline Barnes Crosby.
Utah Historical Society Library (Pages 17-30, Dec. 1852 - March 1853)

Saturday [Dec. 25th.] Christmas day. Tolerably pleasant in the forenoon. Br. Naile went to the mission. Br. Henry Jacobs stayed with us overnight, with whom we had a very agreeable visit. We talked over olden times, he spoke of his trials in the gospel, and seemed rather to murmur at his fortune. He said I reminded him so much of his first wife that it revived all his past trials on her account.

Sunday [Jan.] 2nd. Tolerably pleasant. Afternoon all of us went to meeting, quite a general attendance. Elder Green spoke to the people.

Monday 3rd. I washed and cleaned up the house. Towards evening Br. Henry Jacobs called on us, and informed us of his intentions of marrying the widow Clawson,

January 11th. There were two couples married in our chamber. Mr. John M. Horner officiated. Henry B. Jacobs to Mary Clawson, and Horatio Stanley to Edna Stuart. The party passed off in very good style.

Sunday [March] 20th day. This morning he called in company with Hiram Clark and Ammon Greene, informed us of his success in getting business. It is a beautiful day. Frances took a little ride on horseback, returned in season to let Jona [?] have the horse to ride to church. We neither of us attended today on account of colds. Towards evening Mary Clawson called. She looked very sad, said she had been weeping, gave us an account of her late husband Henry B. Jacobs leaving her in consequence of his old wife coming and claiming her previous right.

See ISL p. 103. This must be Henry's third wife, whom I did not have a name for. The December 25th entry is affecting, as Henry remembers Zina. The March 20th entry is interesting. It doesn't sound like polygamy to me. Aseneth apparently returned to him, so he left Mary, apparently.
A friend asked me what my response was to the Tanners' "review" of my book in the latest Salt Lake City Messenger.

When I wrote *In Sacred Loneliness*, I was committed to producing a moderate, but honest, treatment of a difficult subject. I began the project due to an interest in Eliza Snow and her Smith sister wives, not because I wanted to focus on Joseph Smith and his polygamy. But I decided not to avoid the issue of the marriage to Smith, as it was an important experience in their lives.

Even though I understand that some will read my book only to glean "negative" details about Joseph Smith's polygamy, I am cheered when I find people who have read the book all the way through and have sympathetically relived the lives of 33 fascinating, remarkable women. Judging from their "review" of my book, the Tanners are not among that group. They merely excerpt passages about Joseph Smith for sensational effect.

As I read through their treatment of my book, I once again recognized aspects of their writing that are problematic for me. Though I appreciate their sincerity, and they are definitely a cut above anti-Mormons such as Ed Decker, and though they have done LDS readers a service in republishing early LDS-related books (though often sensational anti-Mormon exposés), in matters of interpretation, I have not found them to be reliable. For a treatment of their limitations by a respected non-LDS historian, see Lawrence Foster, "Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner," in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Summer 1984), 35-64, revised and reprinted in Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher, eds., *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Foster is especially telling when he criticizes the Tanners for applying an extreme negative critique to Mormonism, but not being willing to apply the same critique to their own Biblical and Protestant tradition. (p. 52.)

While the Tanners constantly accuse the LDS church of dishonesty, coverups, and hypocrisy, they themselves may be open to some of the same charges. I dislike Mormon history that systematically censors out anything problematic, tragic, or reflecting human fallibility (i.e., real humanity) in church members or culture. This kind of history is, to me, dishonest, and the opposite of "faith-promoting." (Authentic faith is never dependent on dishonesty or covering up the balanced truth.) Furthermore, this kind of history is often insipid and sentimental.

But on the other hand, I also dislike Mormon history that systematically censors out anything "positive." Mormon history is filled with wonderful people who have performed authentically Christlike actions. There are many stories of heroism and sacrifice. While some church leaders have been authoritarian and controlling, others have been warm and inclusive. Anyone who continually hammers on only the negative is guilty of censorship and coverup, just as is the person who censors out the negative. Both write unrealistic and unbelievable history. Furthermore, the person who includes only the negative can be guilty of sensationalism and the low moral atmosphere of yellow journalism. I sympathize with the Tanners in wanting to redress an oversimplified "positive" history, but their oversimplified "negative" history is just as bad.

In my view, the most honest Mormon history is a history that attempts to have balance, that is not afraid of negative or positive. When "negative" is found, balanced history will try to understand it, put it into historical and psychological context, instead of oversimplifying and sensationalizing it. On the other hand, positive events should not be turned into hagiography (one should not lose sight of the limited human dimensions of even very good people). Human beings, human social groups, and historical events are, of course, very complex. I remember my first reading of the Tanner's *Shadow and Reality* -- you come away from it believing that there has been no good Mormon at any time in all of Mormon history. The true
story, of course, is that there are good Mormons, bad Mormons, and everything in between. The Tanners, in their thirst for negative judgment, radically oversimplify human history.

So I respect the Tanners' sincerity, but believe they have fallen into a trap. It is a natural human tendency to react against extremism by a contrary extremism. In other words, when conservative Mormons produce history without shadows, human faults, or problems, it is easy to respond by producing history intended to refute it that includes only shadows, human faults and problems. But that history is as unbelievable as the history it responds against. Even though some of the details may be true (as in the overidealized positive history), the whole perspective is false. The honest reaction to dishonest extremist history is to write balanced history.

If the Tanners had been committed to providing a balanced perspective in discussing Mormon polygamy, they might have emphasized that polygamy was an accepted part of the culture of the Old Testament, practiced by a great prophet such as Abraham, so is not inherently evil. It is very understandable that a restorationist religion such as Mormonism would feel that it was necessary to "restore" it. Personally, I think that many elements of the Old Testament were not eternal, but related to the Semitic culture of the day, and that polygamy was a very patriarchal custom that does not fit with our present culture, in which women are seen as equal human beings. But if you had the restorationist idea that everything in the Bible needed to be restored (as many Protestants in early America and Protestant Europe did), practicing polygamy is very understandable, and given that limited perspective, even courageous. In addition, the Tanners may have known that other Protestant groups (such as the early Anabaptists) believed in polygamy and practiced it, and that Luther sanctioned polygamy -- but they did not mention this. A book that gives some of this background is John Cairncross, After Polygamy Was Made a Sin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974)(cited in my book on p. 640), especially pp. 36, 49. Luther and polygamy is a fascinating, complicated story that also includes disparities between public pronouncement and private practice, just as we find throughout the history of Mormon polygamy.

The Tanners made great mileage out of Joseph Smith's marriage to his youngest wife, Helen Mar Kimball. However, they failed to mention that I wrote that there is absolutely no evidence that there was any sexuality in the marriage, and I suggest that, following later practice in Utah, there may have been no sexuality. (p. 638) All the evidence points to this marriage as a primarily dynastic marriage. Furthermore, in the Protestant polygamist tradition, it is common to find examples of marriages to young teenagers. (Cairncross, p. 14.) I strongly disapprove of polygamous marriages involving teenage women, but my point is that it is inconsistent and unfair for a Protestant to denounce Mormons for doing such things while not denouncing his or her own tradition.

In the case of polyandry, the Tanners, if they had been committed to balance, might have admitted (as I pointed out in my book, p. 21) that many sincere, intelligent Protestant ministers in Joseph Smith's environment were developing theologies including "spiritual wife" systems. The New York Burned Over District era was a time of great religious ferment, resulting in many utopian colonies and a great deal of marital experimentation. (See Lawrence Foster's fine book, Religion and Sexuality, which considers Mormon polygamy in the context of two other early American Christian religions, the Shakers and the Oneida colony; and see books cited on my p. 640.)

On an individual basis, Mormons made many mistakes with polygamy, a social system that I believe does not work for "modern" (nineteenth and twentieth century) women. As I mentioned earlier, I do not think polygamy is an eternal system that needed to be "restored"; it is rather a cultural artifact from Semitic culture, resurrected by restorationist enthusiasm. But it is inconsistent for Protestants to accuse Mormons of gross sin in practicing polygamy when they accept the Old Testament, with its righteous polygamous prophets, and have polygamous Protestants in their background, motivated by the same restorationist
enthusiasm. I titled one of my chapters "Latter-day Hagar." Even Abraham, though a righteous prophet, had human failings, and did one of his plural wives a serious injustice by casting her out of his household when pressured by his first wife.

Some might ask me, what about many statements by General Authorities saying that polygamy was an eternal principle? I believe in Joseph Smith's adage that "a prophet is not always a prophet"; he, and other Mormon leaders, may have had moments of inspiration, and other moments in which they were expressing their own limited, fallible views. As I state in my book (p. 629), I am a practicing Mormon, of a liberal, Lowell Bennion sort, but I reject absolutist, oversimplified views of religion -- the idea that religious leaders, Biblical or modern, Mormon or Protestant, can be perfect or infallible. I think a non-abolutist view of religion, that allows for cultural and human complexity, is the only religious viewpoint that works, for the thoughtful believer.

While reading the Tanners treatment of my book, I was reminded of another technique they use that can distort an author's meaning. First of all, in choosing to reprint passages from an author's writing for sensationalist effect, they ignore the author's attempts at providing context. But then the quotations are covered with phrases in bold added by the Tanners without attribution, which further sensationalizes and distorts the author's tone. In legal documents, when the author quotes and adds underlining or bolding to the quotes, he or she is required to expressly point out that she or he has added the emphasis. Most respected historians use this technique (adding emphasis to someone else's writing) only sparingly, if at all, probably because, if not used carefully, it can distort the integrity of the quoted material. The Tanners use it almost with the majority of their quotes, and never point out their added emphasis.

Finally, my wish for the Tanners is that they arrive at a more balanced view of Mormonism and their cultural heritage, even if they continue to practice in a Protestant Christian church (which practice I respect). I suspect the Tanners merely looked through my book for negative proof-texting; if so, I hope someday they actually read it completely. Personally, writing In Sacred Loneliness, experiencing the greatness of those thirty or so early Mormon women for five years, caused me to deepen my commitment to my Mormon heritage (within the context of a liberal, non-abolutist faith). I want to be part of the same church those women were part of -- though I am committed to helping the church abandon extremist authoritarianism, censorship of history, and anti-feminism, whenever those things are manifested in the church.
Date: 11-APR-1998 18:55:47.38
From: IN%"aml-list@cc.weber.edu"
Subject: COMPTON: _In Sacred Loneliness_ (Review)
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Date: Fri, 10 Apr 1998 09:51:05 -0600
From: bpetersn@burgoyne.com (Boyd Petersen)
Subject: COMPTON: _In Sacred Loneliness_ (Review)
To: AML-List@cc.weber.edu


The Church and Polygamy

Polygamy is an issue that we as a Mormon culture often wish would simply go away. We seem to be embarrassed by our past. The current Priesthood/Relief Society manual on the teachings of Brigham Young is a case in point. Brigham Young was one of the most married men in American history, having 16 wives by which he had children and 9 wives who bore him none. I Nevertheless, the Priesthood/Relief Society manual never acknowledges that he had more than one wife at a time and only mentions two (Miriam Angeline Works, who died in September 1832, and Mary Ann Angell, who married Brigham in February 1834). Certainly this reflects our cultural reluctance to discuss polygamy publically.

I agree with Eugene England that polygamy was a divine commandment revealed to a specific people at a specific time for a specific purpose, and that the decision to curtail its practice was also a divine commandment (so please do not bother to forward my name to any group in Manti). Nevertheless, I also believe it both denies our heritage and dishonors our pioneer ancestors to try to dust under the rug a belief for which our ancestors sacrificed greatly. These people were not sinners with unholy home lives, rather they were individuals who passed an Abrahamic test, demonstrating their devotion to God, the Church and its leaders by entering into the covenants of Plural Marriage. As one who is descended from such ancestors, I too share Eugene England's desire to "honor those literal ancestors and my many spiritual ancestors who lived that law—faithfully, morally, and at enormous costs." And to deny the historical fact of polygamy is certainly to dishonor those ancestors.

Furthermore, I believe our collective denial only lends credibility to anti-Mormon authors who are more than happy to expose the practice to unknowing Mormons. This, I believe, can only drive members from the Church when they realize that the historical record bears out the words of anti-Mormons and shows how strenuously we as a Mormon culture are trying to deny our history.

That being said, I welcome the publication of Todd Compton's _In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith_. Surely, given our collective denial, only an independent Mormon press would dare to publish this book. And yet the book is hardly anti-Mormon In fact
Compton himself states that his book is "unabashedly celebratory" as he "tries to celebrate in a responsible, balanced way that all of its characters, female and male, Relief Society president and prophet, had weaknesses as well as strengths" (x-xi). And though Compton's portrait is not wholly positive, he acknowledges that the practice was "developed by sincerely religious men" (21), rather than cooked up by a bunch of sex-crazed misogynists. So Compton's book should make few friends among either anti-Mormons out to portray Joseph Smith as a philandering womanizer or Mormons who wish to hide from our polygamous past.

Summary

Mormon polygamy created a "tragic ambiguity," argues Compton. The eternal significance of the Principal was tempered by the acute neglect women received. While men received status from entering into the practice, women received fewer financial resources and less marital attention. Nevertheless, Compton argues that the practice was instituted for purely religious reasons: early Mormonism's striving toward Biblical primitivism led Joseph Smith to embrace many Old Testament practices. Furthermore, the practice became a method for establishing a sort of religious dynasticism—women who were sealed to Joseph Smith established an eternal tie between their entire family and the Prophet and brought spiritual rewards to all.

Compton argues that there is well-documented evidence for 33 marriages to Joseph Smith. While Daniel Bachman documented only 31 in his 1975 thesis "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith," Compton's list is conservative compared to other researchers: George D. Smith lists 43, D. Michael Quinn lists 46, and Fawn Brodie lists 48.

Compton dispels many myths harbored by both Mormons and anti-Mormons about polygamy. First, there is no evidence that the practice was instituted to provide care for unattached older women. In fact, Compton reveals the seldom if ever mentioned fact that one-third of the women sealed to Joseph Smith were already married, thereby creating some unusual polyandrous relationships. Second, Compton shows that sexual relations between Smith and his wives did occur. Smith considered himself married to these women in every sense of the word. Third, Compton dismisses the notion that many anti-Mormons have that Smith's marriage to Fanny Alger was an affair and provides documentation to show that it was indeed a marriage.

Strengths

Polygamy is an issue about which there are and have been few unbiased writers. There were just as many people during Joseph Smith's lifetime who used polygamy as an issue to raise suspicion and anger towards the Church as there are today. Several contemporary historians seem to ignore this fact and cite contemporaneous sources without concern for any agenda, hidden or otherwise, that a source might have had. I have seen articles where testimony from disaffected Mormons like John C. Bennett is granted the same credibility—or more—as that from loyal Mormons. Compton has, in my opinion, done an admirable job in handling his sources. He
doesn't necessarily shy away from sources with an anti-Mormon bias, but
when he does use them he acknowledges their bias and attempts to
corroborate the story with a source from the loyal Church body.

The biggest strength of Compton's book is his choice to focus on
the 33 individual women who were married to Joseph Smith. This provides us
with a moving personal look at their lives as well as a greater
understanding of the historical milieu of the period. And when available,
Compton shares long passages of their personal writings which are deeply
moving and expressed with a simple eloquence. Some are full of pathos,
like Eliza Maria Partridge's description of becoming a plural wife:

... a woman living in polygamy dare not let it be known and nothing
but a firm desire to keep the commandments of the Lord could have induced
a girl to marry in that way. I thought my trials were very severe in
that line and I am often led to wonder how it was that a person of my
temperament could get along with it and not rebel, but I know it was the
Lord who kept me from opposing his plans although in my heart I felt
that I could not submit to them, but I did and I am thankful to my
Heavenly Father for the care he had over me in those troublous times.

(434)

Others are full of faith and hope like this passage from Fanny Young to her
brother John:

Be of good cheer br John, salvation is nearer than when we first
believed—I rejoice in hope of the glory of God—which I believe my eyes
will behold, and my heart exult in. Strive to live near the Lord br
John for I find nothing to comfort my soul but the old fashion'd love of
God! even that love which is stronger than death. this alone gives us
the victory.--this is all my consolation, amid the sorrows and turmoils
of this inconstant life. (618)

Still others document the miraculous events at the time of the Restoration,
as does Zina Diantha Huntington's description of the gifts she experienced
after baptism:

The gifts of the gospel were manifest the first time I ever sang in
tongues after being baptised into the church of Jesus Christ of Latterday
Saints around me was as light as the blaze of a candle I was surrounded
a heavenly influence and no unpleasant sensation from that day the gift
has remained with me. (75)

Compton chooses not only to include the miraculous, but he also
wisely elects to not editorialize about these supernatural events. He
argues in the introduction to the book that these stories help not only
"reproduce the world view of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints" but
often help us to understand what motivated these women to enter into
polygamous relationships (xii-xiii). His forthright inclusion of the
women's spiritual experiences helps us to understand why they could accept
the practice. They saw it as a divine calling. Accounts leaving out such
experiences of heavenly ministrations, gifts, and miracles leave nothing but the socially outrageous idea of one man married to many women.

Weaknesses

One of the book's main strengths also becomes its main weakness. By focusing on the individual wives, Compton exposes the dearth of sources available about some of these individual women. Some chapters, like the chapter on Louisa Beaman, are so short on data that they appear as fictionalized biographies. Compton's recurrent use of words like "apparently," "probably," "may have," and "one imagines," leaves the reader with the same feeling one gets from reading Fawn Brodie—that the biographer is turning fiction writer, reading the minds of characters who never existed outside the mind of the author.

Furthermore, I believe Compton's devotion to revisionist/feminist readings of the historical past sometimes blinds him to the double-edge sword that was polygamy. Certainly polygamy left many women lonely, but it also left many men lonely—the men who were required to give their wives to Joseph. Compton shows how Zina Diantha Huntington was required to leave her first husband Henry Jacobs following Joseph Smith's death and live instead with Joseph's proxy, Brigham Young. Despite his flaws, Jacobs clearly loved Zina deeply, and was left without her both for time and eternity. His letters to Zina are some of the most pathetic in the book.

"I do not murmur nor complain at the Handlings of God no veryly no. . . . I have no feelings against [Brigham Young] nor never had, all is right according to the Law of the Celestial kingdom of our God Joseph." "But I feel alone," Jacobs continues, "& no one to speak to to call my own I feel Like a Lamb without a Mother" (91). Compton does not ignore Jacob's pain, nor does he make light of it, but he does focus his thesis on the way polygamy treated the wives without acknowledging that it had a similar effect on the men. Furthermore, even the men who had more than one wife could never possibly develop the deep relationship with any one of them that a monogamous marriage would allow. This system of marriage would be just as lonely for both the polygamous husband and the men whose wives were taken from them as it was for the polygamous wives. In fact, the wives probably were less lonely than the men in some ways since, as Compton notes, they developed deep relationships with their sister wives which compensated in some manner for the lack of attention from their husbands.

Polygamy clearly left both sexes lonely.

My chief complaint—and one I share with many others I've talked to—is the book's referencing system. Instead of using footnotes, the publisher has chosen to place all references at the end of the book, floating unconnected from the text of the book itself. I suspect this is the publisher's decision rather than the author's. If D. Michael Quinn's Mormonism and the Magic World View were a more recent publication, I would argue that the choice was a reactionary over-compensation to the publisher's choice to use APA style in Quinn's book, placing the references within the text where they interfered with the reading. But in this case, the references are so disconnected from the text that one gets frustrated finding them and finally forgets to read them at all.
This is troubling to anyone who is interested in sources—and with a topic like early Mormon polygamy, sources are critical. The publisher has chosen to employ other conventions of historical writing, such as preserving original mispellings and usage errors in quotations, so it is clear they know their audience is expecting a scholarly historical work. If Compton were not so fair in citing sources, one would suspect that he was trying to hide something by not using footnotes. However, I believe that the publisher is simply trying not to distract the reader from the text with intrusive citations. But this unfortunate editorial decision belies the assumption that the audience for this book expects a certain level of scholarship and would therefore be familiar with, rather than distracted by footnotes. Why Signature Books chose to use a referencing system that is so foreign to a such a genre is both mystifying and frustrating.

My final complaint is that Compton's prose is sometimes tedious and not well edited, packed with clause after clause of related but not necessarily sequential information. For instance, we read: "Though Henry was halfway across Iowa, driving a covered wagon for his wife and two sons, one of them newborn, through danger and privation, at this difficult time, of all times, he was suddenly sent away on a mission" (88). In another convoluted sentence, Compton writes: "Then, on April 3, Zina, who was now twenty-nine, bore a daughter, Zina Presendia, at Old Log Row, which doubtless left her overjoyed" (98). The stacking of phrases and clauses in a comma extravaganza bogs the reader down with parenthetical statements before ever arriving at the the main verb. While these two examples are extreme, the problem is consistent throughout the book. The prose should have undergone many more hours of editing before publication.

Conclusion

Despite some weaknesses, Compton's In Sacred Loneliness is a welcome addition to our understanding of Mormon polygamy. He exposes the myths, documents the facts, and helps us approach the worldview of our polygamous ancestors. In doing so he honors those who went before as both faithful saints who met severe trials with devotion and courage, and as human beings with feelings, failings, and fortitude.

Notes


3 Ibid., 140.

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