

whether or not a sect is part of Christianity (357–70). Other offerings in the book include an essay from Richard E. Bennett on the importance of historicity in religion (81–94) and an analysis from John W. Welch of one of Jesus’s lesser-studied parables (97–116). The volume also features works from a number of other contributors, including Brian D. Birch, Craig L. Blomberg, Richard O. Cowan, Larry E. Dahl, Megan Hansen, J. B. Haws, Paul Y. Hoskisson, Kerry Muhlestein, Lloyd D. Newell, Dana M. Pike, Andrew C. Skinner, Stephen O. Smoot, and Brent L. Top.

*Let Us Reason Together* is particularly useful for Christians desiring to understand LDS beliefs and for Latter-day Saints who want to improve their ability to converse with other Christians. With its comparative analyses, interfaith explanations, kind critiques, diverse viewpoints, and questions, this collection of articles not only honors Millet’s legacy, but also contributes to discussions on a variety of religious, doctrinal, and interfaith topics. Its messages invite readers to join the conversation as fellow Christians, rather than as members of competing theological camps.

—Austin A. Tracy

William P. MacKinnon, ed., *At Sword’s Point, Part 1: A Documentary History of the Utah War to 1858*, and *Part 2: A Documentary History of the Utah War, 1858–1859*, vols. 10 and 11 of *Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier*, ed. Will Bagley and David L. Bigler (Norman, Okla.: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2008, 2016)

Using six decades of research, historian William MacKinnon has created a masterful two-volume documentary history of the Utah War. In creating this helpful collection, he did not reprint

documents that were overly long or readily available from other sources. The two volumes tell “the story of the Utah War’s origins, prosecution, and impact” and highlight “a crucial crisis in the history of the Mormon people” (part 1, 12).

In part 1, MacKinnon describes “an escalating series of incidents” involving “virtually every aspect of federal-Mormon interface: the quality of mail service; the jurisdiction of county, territorial, and federal courts; the evenhandedness of criminal justice; [and] Indian relations” (part 1, 43). He identifies the territorial resolution of January 6, 1857, as a pivotal moment; the resolution declared, “We will not tamely submit to being abused by the Government Officials, here in this Territory; they shall not come here to corrupt our community, set at defiance our laws, trample upon the rights of the people, [and] stir up the Indians” (part 1, 71). Secretary of the Interior Jacob Thompson called the resolution “a declaration of war” (part 1, 102).

In part 2, MacKinnon documents Kit Carson’s claims that Mormons tried to persuade Colorado Utes to join forces with them; the US Army’s exploration to see if the Colorado River could become a supply route; and Brigham Young’s proposal for a “Standing Army of Israel” (part 2, 67). MacKinnon discusses US senator Sam Houston’s support of the Mormons and Utah Territory Supreme Court chief justice Delana R. Eckels’s attempts to “poke the bee hive” by prosecuting polygamy (part 2, 385). The book offers ample evidence that the territorial governor Alfred Cumming was more articulate and politically adept than earlier historians have given him credit for. The illuminating analysis of the Utah War in the “Conclusions” section is alone worth the price of the volume.

Although some readers may quibble with the books' interpretations, MacKinnon has performed a remarkable feat in finding and reproducing these vital documents. These books will appeal to readers who are interested in learning about Mormon history, the Utah War, Manifest Destiny, and the colonization of the American West.

—Devan Jensen

Matthew J. Grow and R. Eric Smith, eds., *The Council of Fifty: What the Records Reveal about Mormon History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017)

The announcement in September 2013 that the LDS Church would be publishing a transcript of the Council of Fifty minutes came as welcome news to the Mormon scholarly community. Previously considered confidential and kept in the First Presidency's vault, the record had been unavailable for reading and research for 160 years. This secrecy had two consequences: debate and speculation among the scholarly community about the record's contents, and complete ignorance of the council among most average Church members. But at long last, the transcript was published in 2016 as the sole volume in the Administrative Records series of the Joseph Smith Papers: *The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records: Council of Fifty Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, ed. Matthew J. Grow and others (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press).

While the publication is a welcome and valuable addition to the corpus of publically available documents on Church history, it is likely difficult for most readers to comb through the eight-hundred-page tome (complete with over one thousand footnotes) and glean what is new and important in the

record. The solution? A compilation of fifteen essays, written by historians for a broad audience, on the new insights found in the Council of Fifty minutes.

*The Council of Fifty: What the Records Reveal about Mormon History* begins with an introduction briefly outlining the history of the council and explaining the decision to publish the record and make it available to the public for the first time. The fifteen articles that follow cover a variety of topics that touch on the nature of the council and how it functioned, as well as its objectives and influence in the Mormon community. Some of the topics covered include Joseph Smith's campaign for the US presidency, the concept of "theodemocracy," religious liberty, significant statements made by Church leaders in council meetings, and what the minutes reveal about Brigham Young's leadership style and personality. The volume also discusses the council's constitution, record-keeping practices, mission to reach out to American Indians, efforts to complete the Nauvoo House, and role in preparing for the Saint's westward migration.

Both of the editors for the volume currently work in the LDS Church History Department. Matthew J. Grow is the director of publications in the department and a general editor for the Joseph Smith Papers, and R. Eric Smith is the editorial manager for the Joseph Smith Papers Project. Both were heavily involved in the publication of the full transcript of the Council of Fifty minutes. Several of the other contributors to the volume are also historians with the Joseph Smith Papers Project, and others are scholars in Mormon studies from several different universities and organizations.

Clocking in at just two hundred pages, this book is an accessible introduction to a record and an organization