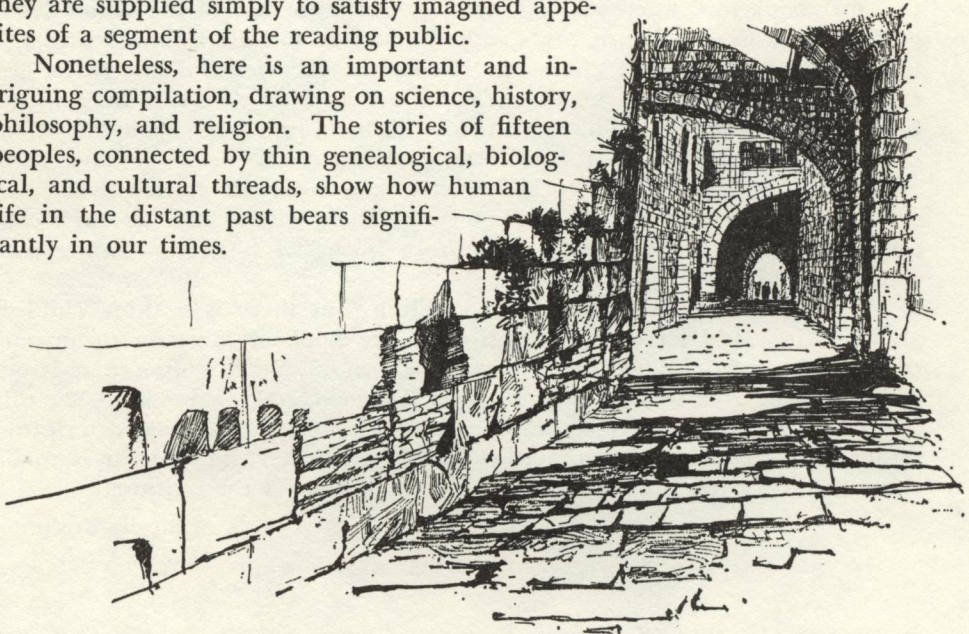


development of the Judaeo-Christian religions. The interactions of various religious systems are rather well presented, and the author perceptively speculates on the origins of certain widespread nature myths, fertility cults, and their propitiatory practices. But Michener's portrayal of the rise of "revealed" religion as seen in the nature and content of the communications of "El" or "El-Shaddai" or "Jahweh" will probably repel those who know of God's revelations to Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets. The fictitious dialogues between El and Zadock or between Jahweh and Gomer strike one as petty imitations of the revelations recorded in the Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and Epistles, or the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Perhaps the most objectionable feature to many intelligent readers will be Michener's frequent insertion of sexual-sensual scenes, with descriptions in more than sufficient detail. Some of these may be justified as conceptualizations of the fertility-cult rituals of Canaanite times which so sorely tempted, and often attracted, Israelite votaries. Others seem gratuitous and without significance as characterizations of peoples or times, and one suspects that they are supplied simply to satisfy imagined appetites of a segment of the reading public.

Nonetheless, here is an important and intriguing compilation, drawing on science, history, philosophy, and religion. The stories of fifteen peoples, connected by thin genealogical, biological, and cultural threads, show how human life in the distant past bears significantly in our times.



SHORT NOTICES

The Book of Mormon Story. An Adaptation by Mary Pratt Parrish. Illustrations by Ronald Crosby. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966. 221 pp. \$6.95.

This handsome book was published in time to be placed under many Christmas trees. Hopefully since that time it has been accomplishing its single purpose — "to prepare [the reader] to read, to enjoy and to understand the Book of Mormon." In line with that aim the book has several unique and attractive features: the scriptural language of the original text remains and many scriptures have been left intact; the major characters of each of

the ten sections are introduced by drawings and short descriptions; and the book itself, generously illustrated with color plates and pencil sketches, is a pleasure to read and look at.

The Book of Mormon Story is an adaptation of the original rather than stories or excerpts from it. The narrative follows the framework of the scriptures very closely, cutting sharply the prophecies, theology, and long speeches, but retaining every bit of action. In fact, while the spiritual aspect of the book is certainly not slighted, an effort is made to portray the Book of Mormon as full of exciting drama. "Its heroic deeds and daring adventures are unsurpassed in any book Its heroes are strong and vigorous physically mighty men who . . . are magnified by the Lord and do super-human tasks while yet human." The appeal is clearly to those who have found romance in classical mythological figures or today's caped crusaders.

Ronald Crosby's memorable illustrations also emphasize the heroic concept of the characters. The color plates feature men of noble visage and physique; Jesus appears to be nine or ten feet tall in relation to his people. The lush coloring of scenes bathed in green and golden light accentuates the story book romanticism. Hampered by our ignorance of the visual detail of Book of Mormon culture, Mr. Crosby has chosen to follow Arnold Friberg's lead and to depict some characters similarly. His wicked King Noah, for example, glowers from beneath the same green plumes at the same white-bearded, bare-chested Abinadi that Mr. Friberg previously painted. Conventions develop by perpetuating strong characteristics, and perhaps King Noah will henceforth be a stock character, known by his green plumes and cheetah skins, just as angels are known by their wings. Mr. Crosby's conceptions will likely be adopted for future books, and the developing conventions will be interesting to watch.

I think of this book mainly for children, but there is nothing childish about it; it would serve well to introduce the Book of Mormon to anyone. Investigating adults who become bogged down in Nephi's quotations from Isaiah will be able to read *The Book of Mormon Story* painlessly. Yet this approach to the Gospel is a pure one because the book is abridged scripture rather than someone's interpretation of Mormonism. Mrs. Parrish is to be commended for her honest and readable adaptation of the scriptures.

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Mormons and the Discovery of Gold. By Norma Baldwin Ricketts. 2nd ed., Placerville, California: Pioneer Press, 1966. 43 pp.

Originally written at the request of the "historian of the State of California" as a souvenir booklet, this monograph (2nd edition) is concerned with the part played by several Mormons in the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848. In order to provide the setting for this important event, the author reviews the life of John Sutter to 1840 and summarizes the course of early Mormon history, including the murder of Joseph Smith; the voyage of the ship *Brooklyn* to California carrying Mormon colonists under the leadership of Samuel Brannan; the call and march of the Mormon Battalion; the founding of the Mormon colony of New Hope (near present-day Modesto); Brannan's trip to meet Brigham Young and his pioneers in 1847; the dis-

charge of the Battalion; the events leading to the employment of some of the Mormon soldiers by John Sutter; and, finally, the details of the discovery of gold.

The last part of the booklet contains brief biographical sketches of the men who participated in the discovery of gold, lists of the Battalion members, and a brief bibliography. There is no documentation.

The story is told as a dramatic narrative with considerable skill. Much of it has been told before in greater detail by H. H. Bancroft, Paul Bailey, and by the reviewer in his Ph.D. Dissertation, so perhaps the principal contribution of the author is that she has made it available to the public in booklet form accompanied by some interesting pictures.

The accounts of the discovery of gold and the people involved are quite accurate, although the author repeats Bancroft's undocumented story of the "salting of the Tailrace with gold" to surprise Captain Sutter. Marshall, the non-Mormon foreman at the mill, is given credit for actually discovering gold, and Brannan's role in spreading the news is correct. Unfortunately, when the author deals with the earlier background material, she is on less familiar ground and repeats several errors that are gradually becoming part of the Mormon tradition. For example, she states that "on February 4, 1846, the first Mormon pioneers, under Brigham Young crossed the Mississippi's ice and plunged into the unknown West" (p. 4). Actually, Brigham Young did not leave until February 15th; the ice did not freeze until February 24th, and the West was not exactly unknown at that time! The conception of the exodus from Nauvoo as a disorganized flight under immediate threat of extermination is implied with such statements as "persecuted on all sides, beginning on February 4, 1846, the Mormons were driven out of Nauvoo, . . . with the choice of either fleeing their homes and the community or being massacred" (p. 3), and "his followers were in dire circumstances having left their belongings in Nauvoo when they fled" (p. 5). This picture of a mob pursuing the Saints to the river's edge and the miraculous freezing of the river just in time to help the Saints escape as portrayed in the motion picture, *Brigham Young*, should be corrected before it becomes a sacred myth and the basis of testimony.

Despite the errors and excessive dramatics, the booklet tells the basic story of the gold discovery in a very readable way and will, no doubt, be a source of satisfaction and pride to many Church members. It is to be hoped that if a third edition is published, the author will do her homework on the facts of early Church history and will submit her work to other students of the subject for corrections and suggestions. She might also consider lengthening the title to read "Mormons and the Discovery of Gold in California."

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