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Review

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were constructed, reconstructed, unconstructed, deconstructed, or the ones doing the construction. As such, the lasting historiographical impact of *Reconstruction and Mormon America* may be how it marks the beginning of the end of “bigger” Reconstruction, its editors’ intentions notwithstanding.

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Jedediah S. Rogers and Matthew C. Godfrey, eds. *The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden: Essays on Mormon Environmental History*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019.

Reviewed by Camden Burd

The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden: Essays on Mormon Environmental History fits into an established trend in environmental history. Over the past decades, historians from Lynn White Jr. to Mark R. Stoll have established the religious roots of environmental change in human history.¹ Like those scholars, the contributors to this collection seek to understand the complicated and interconnected relationship between theology, faith, and the natural world. Divided across three sections, *The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden* provides a much-welcomed examination of the environmental aspects of Mormon theology, culture, and history.

The first set of essays, titled “Theology and Ideology,” historicizes the environmental views of early leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ

1. Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 (March 1967): 1203–7; Mark R. Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

of Latter-day Saints, most notably Brigham Young. Sarah Dant examines Young's religious land ethic by carefully tracking one of his oft-used and historically problematic proclamations: "There shall be no private ownership of the streams that come out of the canyons, nor the timber that grows on the hills. These belong to the people: all the people" (29). Whether Young said it or not, the words do articulate Young's environmental ideology—one that embraced a communal ownership of certain resources such as timber and water access. These were for the betterment of the religious community, he argued, not resources to be exclusively owned or exploited. Dant's essay pairs well with Thomas G. Alexander's chapter on the Mormon society's gradual loss of this collective memory of the salutary environmental theology. Demonstrating that leaders of the church, including Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Orson Hyde, all expressed concern for the overuse of natural resources, Alexander identifies a philosophy that blended "entrepreneurship and stewardship into a seamless garment" (52). Dant and Alexander both agree that the arrival of the transcontinental railroad, new access to markets, the introduction of federal policies that favored individual ownership, and the deaths of early church leaders all led to the dismantling of this religious stewardship. Alexander goes on to argue that the Mormon community had virtually forgotten salutary environmental teachings and instead designed a collective memory based on progress under secular entrepreneurship.

The second grouping of essays examines "Perception and Place" in Mormon history. Matthew C. Godfrey explores the historical perspectives of Mormons as they encountered and transformed Jackson County, Missouri. Like many of their nineteenth-century contemporaries, Mormons viewed Missouri's landscape as "wild," a common sentiment of American settlers that overlooked or ignored the historic presence of Native Americans. Joseph Smith then set out to design a Zion for Mormon settlers where temples and church buildings served as civic landmarks and each parcel of land established an "individual's connection with God" (83).

Notions of an American Zion provided a stark contrast to the urban environments that early Mormon missionaries encountered in England.

Such transatlantic environmental perceptions are the subject of Brett D. Dowdle's contribution to the collection. The essay explores the divergent environmental perceptions of American missionaries in England and, alternatively, the views of British converts as they arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois. Urban blight, pollution, unprecedented noise, and mass poverty stood out to Mormon missionaries who viewed the landscape through a yeoman farmer's lens. On the other hand, many British converts arrived in the American Midwest with disappointment. Dowdle argues that the combination of "frontier life and the lack of the commodities offered in Britain proved detrimental to their commitment to Mormonism" (104). Dowdle's essay recovers the divergent environmental experiences of American and European Mormons in antebellum America by demonstrating how Mormon migrants linked their faith to the varying environmental realities of the era.

Richard Francaviglia's essay demonstrates how visions of Zion made their way into maps produced by Utah-based Mormons in the second half of the nineteenth century. These amateur maps demonstrated the colonial, environmental, and religious views of Mormon settlers who sought to transform the arid desert of Utah into a blooming and productive Deseret. Francaviglia identifies spiritual mysticism as well American Orientalism in the early Mormon-made maps. Some mapmakers, for example, firmly believed that Native Americans were Lamanites. They read religious passages when they mapped mountains and streams and saw divine meaning in the landscape, leading them to justify the colonization of the land with confidence.

Like many Americans, Mormon views of nature changed over time. Through a history of Zion National Park, Betsy Gaines Quammen illustrates that by the turn of the twentieth century, residents of southern Utah slowly came to appreciate the landscape not solely for its agricultural potential but for its natural beauty. When the federal government identified Zion Canyon for inclusion in the National Park System, both Mormons and non-Mormons worked together to redefine the region as a recreational destination. Park administrators adopted Mormon religious symbols for features of the park such as Kolob Canyon and Mount

Moroni—an act that Quammen argues “resonated with Mormons and helped non-Mormons envision the LDS association between spirituality and place” (142). The author’s examination of the Zion Easter Pageant that took place in the park from 1935 to 1940 further demonstrates how the infusion of Mormon religious traditions in the park helped local residents create new meaning in the landscape.

The third section of the collection, “Agrarianism and Urbanism,” serves as a transition in the collection from essays regarding cultural and ideological ideas of nature to the physical realities of those actions. Jeff Nichols’s chapter, “Before the Boom: Mormons, Livestock, and Stewardship, 1847–1870,” outlines the central role of livestock to the transformation of the Utah landscape in the early years of the Mormon settlement. Though the settlers were overwhelmingly agriculturists focused on their fields, cattle and livestock provided a necessary infusion of capital and goods. The introduction of cattle and sheep wiped out native grasses and led to the degradation of soils. Church leadership responded by introducing communal ownership policies and theo-democratic regulations attempted to manage the territory’s herds. Though the early stewardship efforts proved effective, they often were ignored or abandoned during drought, hard winters, and insect infestations. Furthermore, Nichols claims that the end of this stewardship took place in the 1870s when the rise of market economics and the transcontinental railroad shifted Mormons’ focus from kingdom building to profiteering.

Environmental hardship would continue to be a theme for Mormons through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—especially those involved in agricultural pursuits. Brian Frehner’s essay explores the complex relationship between residents and the Virgin and Muddy River systems in southern Utah and Nevada. Frehner pushes against a dichotomous historiography that either lauds the technological transformation of waterways or laments the destruction of nature. Frehner weaves a complex narrative of a several communities’ attempts to divert water, grow cotton and other plants, and sustain themselves in harsh bioregions. Such attempts to make Eden in the desert, at the direction of LDS Church officials, often ended in the loss of property and life.

In a similar vein, Brian Q. Cannon's essay examines the ecological limits of farming in Utah as well as the cultural and religious shifts that occurred as a direct result of the region's environmental realities. At the turn of the century, Mormon leadership worried about a growing trend of outmigration among second- and third-generation Mormons. Seeking better access to water and more promising soils, many Mormons left for neighboring states, territories, Mexico, and Canada. Church leadership, committed to the mission to "build up Zion," encouraged residents to stay in Utah and farm the landscape more extensively, often to the detriment of the land and the farmers' financial well-being. By the 1930s federal New Deal officials began to promote new farming practices and policies with mixed success in Utah. Perhaps most interestingly, Cannon tracks a larger transformation of Mormon cultural attitudes toward agriculture from the late nineteenth century into the mid-twentieth century. During this period, Utah's mostly rural population began to transition to an urban society. Their Jeffersonian views of nature weakened as Mormon ties to agricultural roots weakened. Environmental forces, Cannon argues, led to a fundamental shift in Mormon culture.

The rapidly urbanizing society did not sit well with a portion of church leadership who still believed agrarianism was an essential component of Mormon faith and culture. Nathan N. Waite's contribution to the collection examines President Spencer W. Kimball's efforts to promote home gardens in the 1970s and preserve this defining feature of Mormon culture. Believing that gardening could serve as an extension of the Church Welfare Plan, Kimball called upon followers to dedicate a portion of the suburban and urban lands to gardens to save money and ensure access to food in times of economic volatility. Under Kimball's leadership, the church championed a unique "back to nature" message that combined traditional agrarian roots with burgeoning conservative politics.

Rebecca K. Anderson's chapter provides a welcome break from the agricultural focus of the collection by examining Utah's "Concrete Zion." Due to convenient and natural reserves of cement-making materials, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mormons had ready access to

the materials that literally built Zion. Anderson's essay also historicizes the modern demographic realities of Mormons living in the Wasatch front—populations that are far more urban and suburban than rural. If many Mormons viewed the sand and gravel deposits as a sign of divine providence, then it is not difficult to understand modern Mormon landscapes. After all, the Wasatch Front today is defined by suburban sprawl and strip malls. Might these places just be the material manifestation of those blessed, cement-making resources?

The final two essays serve as a sort of call to action. George B. Handley's epilogue argues for a moral and ethical need for Mormons to grapple with their own environmental histories. These stories offer Mormons a "chance to shake off our dream of innocence and learn to act with greater caution and self-distrust so as to minimize our destructive tendencies" (257). Though Handley's words are intended for a Mormon audience, the argument applies to any reader regardless of faith. Handley's artful prose precedes an essay by Elder Marcus B. Nash, a General Authority Seventy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His is a truly unique contribution to the collection and provides a moment for church leadership to directly address the topic of environmental issues and scripture. His essay bridges the divide between academic and theological interpretations of Mormon environmental thought. The essay might even help to place this collection in front of new audiences who might otherwise choose to overlook traditional edited collections on environmental history.

Though *The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden* is an innovative contribution to the fields of Mormon studies and environmental history, it is not without its blind spots. This collection is more grounded in the nineteenth century than the twentieth and focuses far more on agricultural topics than urban ones. A gendered interrogation of nature and Mormon culture and religion is also absent. Readers hoping to connect Mormon history to modern environmental issues will have to look elsewhere as this collection largely overlooks the Sagebrush Rebellion, modern conservatism, and strands of anti-environmentalism that have cropped up in Zion over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

These critiques do not detract from this innovative collection but suggest areas of growth as this area of research continues to develop. Furthermore, readers should not overlook the innovative construction of the collection. In addition to historical essays, this volume suggests that Mormon readers reflect upon, and even recover, an early environmental ethic clearly outlined across several essays. *The Earth Will Appear as the Garden of Eden* will serve as an essential text for researchers of religion. But more interestingly, perhaps, the collection provides a compelling model for other faith traditions to introduce environmental history scholarship to nonacademic, religious audiences.

Camden Burd is an assistant professor of history at Eastern Illinois University. He holds a PhD in history from the University of Rochester, where he specialized in American environmental history. His environmental history scholarship has been published in *The Michigan Historical Review* as well as *The Conservative Heartland: A Political History of the Postwar American Midwest* (University of Kansas Press, 2020).

Sarah M. S. Pearsall. *Polygamy: An Early American History*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019.

Reviewed by Catherine J. Denial

Polygamy: An Early American History, by Sarah M. S. Pearsall, is a fascinating book, although not quite the comprehensive survey of plural marriage that the title might convey. Instead of a continuous history of polygamy as practiced across the territory currently known as the United States, Pearsall takes deep dives into specific moments that can illustrate something about the presence and uses of plural marriage in America. There is much to enjoy about this approach—the reader's ability to compare and contrast multiple, differing practices of polygamy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries; the geographic scope