

Still, the narratives are engaging and the information fresh. Readers with a more historical, legal, or political science bent will find *An Indispensable Liberty* a trove of wonderful information that will enrich their more theoretical work.

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*The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History.* Ed. by Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016. xlvi, 767 pp. \$49.95.)

Mormon women have remained widely associated with plural marriage since social campaigns of the later 1800s led to antipolygamy legislation and the subsequent curtailing of the practice. When travel writers of the time promulgated tales of Mormon harems filled with gullible wives, the women themselves found their authentic experiences lost on outside observers. When these women campaigned through their own organization, the Relief Society, they again found an unsympathetic audience scandalized by their defense of polygamy and women's suffrage. This episode, so pivotal to Utah Mormonism, has dominated historical work on the Relief Society and Mormon women of the nineteenth century, tempting observers to filter accounts primarily through a hermeneutic of marriage and family. *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* presents a collection of documents so rich with detail that interpreters must entertain alternatives to the dominant narrative. The volume gives evidence of women's agency swaying theology, mobilizing industry, institutionalizing volunteer service, advancing medical treatment, developing art, and domesticating culture, to name a few accomplishments.

Divided into four parts, this anthology spans the Relief Society from its inception in 1842 to its jubilee celebration in 1892 with seventy-eight documents relating to the institution. A companion Web site ([\[historianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society\]\(http://historianspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society\)\) provides online access to the entire contents of the volume, including all of its transcriptions, photographs, and editorial matter. Some documents, especially the minute book kept at the inaugural meetings of the society, represent a momentous shift in availability policies of the sponsoring archive, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Formerly closed to researchers, the minute book and at least two excerpts from discourses by Brigham Young are accessible to the public in printed form for the first time. These sources show how Mormonism's founding prophet, Joseph Smith, introduced new rituals, or temple ordinances, to both women and men between 1842 and 1844, and present concepts missing from other accounts. The scheme for how priesthood governed the church included women not as mere auxiliaries to men but as participants. How actively Smith, Young, and other leaders thought women should participate in the priesthood, however, will remain open to debate even with the minute book on full display.](http://church</a></p>
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Though not overtly stated, recent agitation over women's roles in the Mormon church appears to frame the editors' introductions to the documents. Across the four sections and the general introduction, priesthood receives more coverage than other contextual signposts the editors provide, and usually in reference to whether and how much women have invoked authority, ecclesiastical or otherwise. An assessment of Smith's 1842 statement that Relief Society members ought to "administer in that authority which is confer'd on them" (pp. xxvi, 55), for instance, concludes by citing later terminologies employed by church leaders who emphasized separate "offices" held by men and women and the interchangeable meanings in the vernacular of the 1880s of *ordain* and *set apart* (p. xxxiii). Though not an apologia for current church policies, the introductions do tread cautiously when discussing terms used rather straightforwardly by the original writers. The changing rhetoric surrounding priesthood authority in this period ought to invite deeper analysis—a project outside the format and intent of the volume but an outcome well facilitated by the editors' choices and presentation of the sources.

I fear the contribution this volume makes to Mormon studies and the book's singular achievement in assembling such a fine and thorough corpus of sources may overshadow its value in the minds of historians at large. This is not a documentary history of a nineteenth-century institution alone, or of Mormon women, or of ecclesiastical development—this is the recovery of voices who speak from margins within and without their principal community, with insights informing women's history, the American West, interreligious encounters, voluntarism, adaptive religiosity, politics, even nationalism, industrialization, and modernism. By its sheer variety and hitherto untapped and voluminous data, it compels researchers outside subfields in Mormon studies and American religion to take note. Even novices are without excuse: between the supplemental materials in footnotes, introductory essays, source notes, and an extensive biographical directory, the editors adeptly guide the nonspecialist and make highly accessible many previously underrepresented sources. Mormon women's studies, and I dare say the broader historiography on American religions, will need to consult this collection or risk committing a glaring omission.

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*Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness.* By W. Paul Reeve. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xiv, 335 pp. \$34.95.)

W. Paul Reeve offers an intriguing examination of the confluence of racial and religious identity in *Religion of a Different Color*. Mormonism's struggle with racial inclusiveness allows Reeve to illuminate the meaning of whiteness in a number of unique ways. He concludes that Mormons succeeded in being deemed "white" by American society only at the expense of their earlier racial inclusiveness. Their achievement also came just as white supremacy waned and segregation became a moral evil. Hence, Mormonism again

became racially suspect, this time for being "too white" (pp. 12, 214).

Reeve organizes his book around the fictitious multiethnic family of one "Elder Berry." Berry's children are presented in stereotypical images and include a Native American, a Chinese, and an African American child along with a Dutch, a Scottish, and an Irish child. Using this conceit, Reeve examines how mainstream Americans defined Mormons by associating them with the racial characteristics of Native Americans, Asians, and African Americans. In all cases, the Mormon practice of polygamy—even after it was officially abandoned—provided outsiders with fodder for accusing Mormons both of degeneracy and amalgamation. Mormons responded by increasingly denouncing miscegenation and imposing racial restrictions on the priesthood and on access to various Temple Ordinances (rites and ceremonies conducted only in a temple).

Reeve's research into both anti-Mormon rhetoric and the Mormons' defense of themselves is extensive and well balanced. His core analysis—on how race is socially constructed—offers insights into to just how flexible people were in their creation of what they believed to be inflexible categories. Reeve notes, "the Mormon story lays bare, in all of its ugly and naked defenselessness, the self-interested and manipulative nature of racial identity construction" (p. 261). Reeve also examines the interesting debate among Mormonism's detractors regarding how quickly a population may degenerate into an entirely new race, as some believed the Mormons had done in matter of only two or three generations.

While the book is well written, Reeve makes too many assumptions about the reader's understanding of Mormonism. Those not familiar with the religion would have benefited greatly from a brief explanation of the nature of the Mormon priesthood, of sealing marriages, and of the Temple Ordinances, as they all play a role in the Mormon struggle for whiteness. Additionally, this reviewer wondered if Mormon belief in Mother in Heaven played a role in defending the religion against accusations that Mormons enslaved women through polygamy and that this was a sign of racial degeneracy. This argument, however, would have had needed to be made by men because, as