

## BOOK NOTES

**Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster.** *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency.* Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2008. ix + 304 pp., with index. \$24.95.

Newell Bringhurst and Craig Foster have provided an account of “Mormons,” very loosely identified, who have made a run for the presidency of the United States. The authors begin with Joseph Smith’s 1844 presidential campaign and end with the attempt of Mitt Romney in 2008 to secure the Republican nomination. They describe the efforts of nine men and one woman who had at least some connections to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and who have sought the highest office in the United States. These include, in addition to Joseph Smith, the following: Parley P. Christensen (1920), Ezra Taft Benson (1968), Eldredge Cleaver (1968), George Romney (1968), Mo Udall (1976), Sonia Johnson (1984), Bo Gritz (1992), Orrin Hatch (2000), and Mitt Romney (2008). The relationship of some of them to the church has been tenuous, ranging from future members to active or inactive members to former members. Their political affiliations have also run the length of the political spectrum.

The book has been described as both a fun read and a very interesting history filled with little-known facts about the men and woman who ran for president. For example, we learn that Joseph Smith was the first clergyman to run for president and the first presidential candidate to be assassinated; that David O. McKay refused to allow Ezra Taft Benson, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, to campaign for the presidency or to seek to become a vice-presidential running mate; that *The A Team*’s Colonel John “Hannibal” Smith and Sylvester Stalone’s “Rambo” were both based on Bo Gritz and his wartime and post-Vietnam War adventures; and that after losing in his

presidential bid, Orrin Hatch faced stiff opposition in his re-election to the Senate and was even booed by fellow Republicans during the nominating convention in Utah.

Included in the book are Joseph Smith's presidential speech, titled "General Smith's Views of the Powers and Policies of the Government"; George Romney's 1966 speech on religion, "Most Important Is Faith"; and Mitt Romney's 2007 religion speech, "Faith In America." Perhaps the most interesting appendix in the book is the one concerning the so-called White Horse Prophecy, which was attributed to Joseph Smith and has continued to be passed along by rank-and-file members. Even more disturbing, George Romney, Orrin Hatch, and Mitt Romney were haunted by this bizarre "prophecy" because it was used during the campaign by journalists and critics of the Church of Jesus Christ to question the qualification of a Latter-day Saint for public office in the United States. The most compelling portion of *The Mormon Quest* is the discussion of the spurious origins of the "prophecy."

While the book reflects the excitement and political interest engendered by Mitt Romney's failed 2008 effort to gain the Republican presidential nomination, the historical information packed into it has lasting value and makes the book a worthy addition to a Latter-day Saint's library.

**Craig L. Foster. *A Different God? Mitt Romney, the Religious Right, and the Mormon Question*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008. xvi + 328 pp., with index. \$70.00 (hardback), \$24.95 (paperback).**

This is a revealing, hard-hitting look at Mitt Romney's recent attempt to secure the presidential nomination. At the heart of this volume is a discussion of the "Mormon Question" raised during his campaign: Because Mormons believe in what most Americans see as alien, even non-Christian doctrines and strange practices, could a Mormon president be trusted to preserve, protect, and promote the common good of the United States?

The book tries to place Romney's campaign within a historical and political context by spending two chapters discussing the rise and

power of the Religious Right as well as the delicate and often strained relationship Latter-day Saints have with this powerful voting bloc of the Republican Party. Another chapter gives a brief overview of the church's political history.

Naturally, much of the book examines Mitt Romney's effort to secure the Republican nomination for president; hence it deals with the anti-Mormon bias he faced, a bias also manifested by some of his fellow presidential contenders. Some criticisms came from secular sources, but the primary opposition to Romney was grounded in intense religious bigotry.

Foster, whose previous publications include works defining and describing stereotyping and imagery in anti-Mormon literature, discusses themes and methods of attack used by Romney's critics. The book also discusses the impact it made not only on the campaign but also on Latter-day Saints across the country.

*A Different God?* is a fast-paced but also meticulously researched and comprehensively documented book that will hold the reader's attention. Regarding the book's potential for controversy, Foster ruefully commented that there will probably be some angry evangelicals. Whether or not that is the case, the book will surely make an interesting addition to anyone's collection.