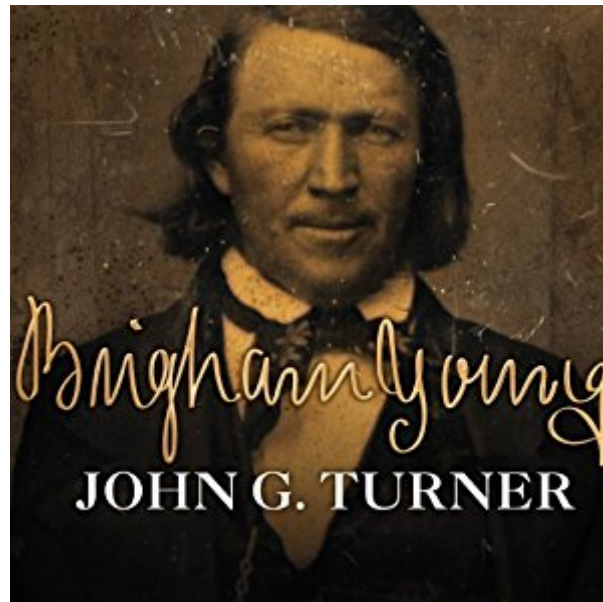


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Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet



Synopsis

Brigham Young was a rough-hewn craftsman from New York whose impoverished and obscure life was electrified by the Mormon faith. He trudged around the United States and England to gain converts for Mormonism, spoke in spiritual tongues, married more than 50 women, and eventually transformed a barren desert into his vision of the Kingdom of God. While previous accounts of his life have been distorted by hagiography or polemical exposés, John Turner provides a fully realized portrait of a colossal figure in American religion, politics, and westward expansion. After the 1844 murder of Mormon founder Joseph Smith, Young gathered those Latter-day Saints who would follow him and led them over the Rocky Mountains. In Utah, he styled himself after the patriarchs, judges, and prophets of ancient Israel. As charismatic as he was autocratic, he was viewed by his followers as an indispensable protector and by his opponents as a theocratic, treasonous heretic. Under his fiery tutelage, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints defended plural marriage, restricted the place of African Americans within the church, fought the U.S. Army in 1857, and obstructed federal efforts to prosecute perpetrators of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. At the same time, Young's tenacity and faith brought tens of thousands of Mormons to the American West, imbued their everyday lives with sacred purpose, and sustained his church against adversity. Turner reveals the complexity of this spiritual prophet, whose commitment made a deep imprint on his church and the American Mountain West.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Turner does a great job covering the fascinating life of Brigham Young. On occasion, Turner seems to make assertions where objectivity might suggest restraint. But, he also does a very good job at attempting to stay neutral, while at the same time proffering suggestions as to why Young acted the way he did. Really enjoyed it. Would recommend to all audiences.

Very well written! Extremely informative but in a non-biased way. Great book for Mormons and non-Mormons alike! If you like American history, you'll appreciate this one.

John Turner has written an interesting and readable biography of a controversial figure in American history; controversial because of his religion, which at the time included polygamy; Brigham Young was a Mormon. But although his religion defined him, it was the settling of the Rocky Mountain west by Mormons under his leadership that makes him an important figure in the frontier history. Following the murder of Joseph Smith by a mob while in the Carthage, Illinois jail, the young Mormon Church faced a crisis that saw it splinter under several potential leaders. Brigham Young became the leader of what would become the largest element to grow from Smith's original church, and it was under his leadership that the church and its members moved to Utah after years of oppression in the mid-west. This was no small deal to the United States. Besides Utah, Young sent Mormons to San Bernardino, California, to Las Vegas, Nevada, to Idaho and Canada, and to Arizona and Mexico. And until the federal government redrew state boundaries over the years to reduce Mormon influence, parts of the existing states of Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Colorado, and California were once under Young's political and religious leadership. Obviously Turner's book is focused on Young. The author follows several key themes in Young's life: first was the importance of Mormonism to Young and how this affected his decisions. He believed in Joseph Smith and his religion; both of these became the key motivators for Young. Second, because of the abuse of Mormons in the mid-west, and due to the murder of Joseph Smith after he turned himself in, Young never trusted the government again. This became a driving factor in his dealings with the federal government which were, for the most part, negative. Third, under Young relations with Native Americans oscillated between an unusual amount of friendliness, for the time, and the more normal relations with settlers due to the reality on the ground. Overall, Young's policy, was driven by the idea that Native Americans were descended from the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon, and therefore needed to be saved. The book also addresses his broader social experiment with communalism within the church in a drive to make it self-sufficient. Again, driven by his distrust of "gentiles" who

had murdered Joseph Smith, and of the government that did not protect him or Mormons, Young routinely tried to implement policies that excluded outsiders, and that would force Mormons to be self-reliant. Of course, Turner addresses the two more controversial elements those of polygamy and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. In the case of polygamy, Young was a real believer in the concept because it was part of his religion, and Joseph Smith. As for the Mountain Meadows Massacre, Turner believes that, based on the timeline, Young did not order it, and was not aware of it until after the fact. He then spent the next 20 years ignoring it or putting off federal investigations of the subject. Overall, this is a good, balanced, traditional biography of a man who greatly impacted the settlement of the west and who essentially laid the foundation for the current Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormons. Whether or not you like the religion, the fact is Brigham Young was a significant part of American history.

Good book at a great price.

Having read a previous (and very biased) biography of Young, I bought this book in hopes of getting a more subjective and comprehensive look at this truly remarkable man. I thoroughly enjoyed Mr Turner's book and hated to ever put it down. It provides a tremendous historical perspective of the 'Rocky Mountain West (and particularly Utah).. At the time Brigham Young and his Latter Day Saint followers arrived in Utah in 1848, it was virtually unknown territory to the 'white man', with the exception of trappers and guides such as Bridger and Jeremiah Johnson. Utah was primarily occupied by the Ute, Paiute, and a few other Native American tribes. It is remarkable just how much influence Brigham had in shaping what is now the Mountain West. And Turner pulls no punches in examining all sides of Young's complex nature and personality. It reveals his dark side as well as showing what a tremendous leader and organizer the man was. In addition to being the prophet and leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. If you enjoy western history or are interested in learning more about the early Mormon church, please buy this book. It is a superb work in my opinion.. Craig Rizzi

John Turner, IMO, has done an excellent job with this book. About as fair a history as any Mormon can hope to expect from a non-Mormon. There are a lot of difficult things in Brigham's history including the polygamy, Mountain Meadows Massacre, and the tension with the US government, and I feel the author handled all the difficult things with balance. He certainly tackled them all head-on. As I read, I couldn't help but feel that this is a perfect sequel to Richard Bushman's "Rough

Stone Rolling". In fact, I believe it would be good for most readers to read that before starting this one. I wanted to learn a lot of new things from a fair-minded historian and that's exactly what I got.

Stand back and read about Brigham Young with a contextual and objective look. Covers his early life and onward. Life was a lot different then and it helps a history buff understand how it was. Thanks

Best biography of Young yet written. The LDS Church made many materials available to him that had never been available to earlier biographers.

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