

Book Reviews

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM. Ed. Daniel H. Ludlow. 5 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1992. lxxxvii, 1848 pp., heavily illustrated with photographs, maps, and charts (in vols. 1–4); LDS scriptures (vol. 5). Vols. 1–4, \$249 (distributed through BYU Bookstore); vols. 1–5, \$340 (available from Macmillan).

Reviewed by Davis Bitton, Professor of History, University of Utah.

Of the making of encyclopedias there is no end. And now Mormonism has one. Actually, we have had our Andrew Jenson encyclopedias for many years, and if Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* isn't a one-volume encyclopedia of its subject, at least in intent, I don't know what it is. But now we have a lavish, multi-volume, semiofficial encyclopedia, intended for libraries, for the general reader, and for Latter-day Saints. If its bulk and price tag assure that it will not go in the suitcases of missionaries or be carried in little zippered leather tote bags to Sunday meetings, we can nevertheless be sure that it will be much used and will be around for a long time.

Soon I will indulge in the reviewer's prerogative of grumbling just a little (although I hope not murmuring), but first tribute must be paid to Daniel Ludlow and his editorial board for just getting the job done. When Macmillan indicated an interest and when Brigham Young University and its board of trustees responded affirmatively, the task remained of planning the content, finding contributors, and riding herd on them to get their contributions submitted according to guidelines. And of course there then had to be completed a mammoth work of assembling illustrations, preparing maps, editing, and production. It was enough to be more than a little intimidating. Some of us winced as we thought of the many ways such a work could go sour, creating problems and failing in its purpose. Yet the simple fact is that the job was done, with thoroughness and responsibility, and on time. It must say something about the accumulated talents of Brigham Young University, reinforced by other scholars of the Church, that such an enterprise could be carried to a successful conclusion. One cannot imagine such a feat occurring in that distant year of 1948 when I entered the Y as a freshman.

Since encyclopedias are organized alphabetically according to an irrational but convenient usage that has become standard since at least Pierre Bayle's seventeenth-century work, it is worth spending time with the twenty-three page "Synoptic Outline" at the beginning of volume 1 (lxv), which groups all the articles according to general topics. Its five major headings—(1) history of the Church, (2) scriptures, (3) doctrines, (4) organization and government of the Church, and (5) "procedures and practices of the Church and its members as they relate to themselves and to society in general"—are each subdivided. The whole outline reveals an admirable overarching conceptualization.

It is of course manifestly impossible to be all things to all people. Indeed, the predictable adjective employed when reviewing any collective work is "uneven." So let us acknowledge a few problems. For one thing, the choice of authors sometimes raises questions. I have before me a list of scholars who have established their competence and authority on different topics relevant to the *Encyclopedia* who are not represented. Some of Mormonism's best scholars are included among the contributors; however, they are obviously far from a complete mustering of the Church's best and brightest. But, then, you can't include everyone, and as long as the articles are well done, who cares who does them?

In the early stages of the project a criticism of male domination led to placing Addie Fuhrman and Jeanne B. Inouye on the editorial board. Over one hundred women had already been invited to contribute articles. This is still a minority of those designated to participate, although their articles are convincing evidence that Latter-day Saint women are intelligent and articulate, which of course was never in question for anyone having first-hand experience with Latter-day Saints in those trenches we call wards. As with the 738 contributors in general (lxiv), the number of women authors could have been multiplied several times over.

The editors had the happy idea of inviting non-Mormon contributors. Thus we have the seasoning of such eminent authorities as James H. Charlesworth, Frank Moore Cross, Jr., W. D. Davies, John Dillenberger, Joseph Rosenblatt, Huston Smith, Timothy Smith, Krister Stendahl, Annette Hampshire, and perhaps others. Jan Shipps offers an "independent interpretation" of Mormonism as a new religion (2:937). Especially important is the article on the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church historian.

The *Encyclopedia* contains thirteen appendixes. The "Biographical Register of General Church Officers" in appendix 1 is handy but contains only the barest of information: position, date of beginning the appointment, birth date and place, name of spouse, number of children, previous occupational or church-service background, and death date and place.

No plural wives are named or dates of plural marriages given, although where applicable the phrase “practiced plural marriage” is included. The word *Seventy* is used; but to find out whether a General Authority belongs to the First or the Second Quorum or to that earlier and smaller group then known as the First Council of [the] Seventy, readers will need to consult appendix 5.

“A Chronology of Church History” appears as appendix 2, listing about 250 events from the year 1771 (the birth of Joseph Smith, Sr.) to 1991. As with all such listings, the selection of events is arbitrary. No “significant” events are listed between 1955 and 1961. In 1964 the significant event was “Observance of Family Home Evening reemphasized” (4:1657). Useful enough for a quick orientation, such a chronology is far from an adequate representation of Mormon history year by year.

Appendix 4 reprints some “Doctrinal Expositions of the First Presidency,” and appendix 8 has some letters of the First Presidency. I wish that the introductory statement had acknowledged the existence of James R. Clark’s valuable *Messages of the First Presidency*,¹ as the *Encyclopedia* lists this work in its abbreviations of frequently cited works.

A glossary briefly defines several words or expressions common in Latter-day Saint usage. One can quibble here and there. “Great and abominable church” is “all assemblies, congregations, or associations of people not authorized by God and that fight against God and his purposes” (4:1768). A short definition of this nature is likely to be misunderstood, for most organizations, such as the American Historical Association and even the local sewing circle, show no evidence of authorization from God. “Manifesto of 1890” is defined as “the pronouncement that the Church had officially ended the practice of polygamy” (4:1769). Well, at least “pronouncement” and “officially” suggest the possibility of interpretation. But did the Manifesto purport to end the “practice” of polygamy, i.e. the continuation of marriage relationships already established, or only the solemnization of new plural marriages? Fortunately for these and many other key terms in the glossary an asterisk signals the presence of a longer, more adequate article on the same topic in the body of the work.

In the area of Church history, one can turn to “History of the Church” (2:598), which has separate, lengthy articles on six successive periods from 1820 to 1990. By historians of established reputation, these articles cumulatively comprise a very useful history of the Church. Closely related articles are those by Douglas F. Tobler and S. George Ellsworth—“History, Significance to Latter-day Saints” (2:595; only partially adequate to the subject)—and by Howard C. Searle, who wrote excellent articles on church historians (2:589) and Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church* (2:647).

To derive the complete value of the *Encyclopedia* for the study of Church history one needs also to examine the numerous more specialized historical articles, ranging from “First Vision” (2:515) through “Seagulls, Miracle of” (3:1287) and on to “Women, Roles of” (4:1574). Add to these the biographies and place references—“Mountain Meadows Massacre” (2:966), “South Bainbridge (Afton), New York” (3:1400), etc.—and one has a rather good resource for Mormon history on the introductory level.

Always of special interest is the subject of polygamy, treated here under “Plural Marriage” (3:1091). We read that plural marriage was “openly practiced” (3:1094) after the departure of the Saints from Nauvoo. Although it was known by some people, it was not publicly announced or proclaimed until 1852 (3:1094). We read that the exact percentage of participation is unknown but that “a maximum of from 20% to 25% of Latter-day Saint adults were members of polygamous households” (3:1095). Adults? Or married adults? Or should it, as I think, be stated so as to include all family members? Since the degree of participation varied from year to year and from place to place, we are still far from having a precise reading. The article under “History of the Church” states more carefully that “in some communities as much as twenty to twenty-five percent of the Latter-day Saint population eventually lived in polygamous households, with most men who practiced polygamy having one to four plural wives” (2:617).

It is child’s play to come up with suggestions for articles not found here. Especially in the biographies. One can imagine the policy decisions that ruled out many potential biographical sketches, but I would argue strenuously that B. H. Roberts is far more important to understanding Mormon history than, say, David Patten or Junius F. Wells. And where is J. Golden Kimball? Marvin O. Ashton? LeGrand Richards? Matthew Cowley? Or that great missionary Ben E. Rich? Although much information about these and many other figures can be found in the *Encyclopedia* by consulting the index—for example, Roberts is discussed under “Intellectual History” (2:685), J. Golden Kimball under “Humor” (2:664), and LeGrand Richards under “Presiding Bishopric” (3:1128)—for anything approaching an encyclopedia of Mormon biography we will have to fall back on Andrew Jenson’s old work,² supplementing it with such newer compilations as *Sister Saints* (1978),³ *Supporting Saints* (1985),⁴ and the annual editions of the *Deseret News Church Almanac*.⁵

If non-Mormon scholars are unimpressed with the articles on the scriptures, Stephen E. Robinson explains in “Bible Scholarship” (1:112) some of the limitations within which Mormons work. (See also Philip Barlow’s *Mormons and the Bible*, published by Oxford University Press,⁶ mentioned in the bibliography at the end of the article on “Bible: King

James Version.”) Likewise, theologians and theology students who find little of substance in articles of interest to them should read Louis C. Midgley’s article on “Theology” (4:1475), which explains Latter-day Saint neglect of this area as it is traditionally understood. Within the Latter-day Saint frame of reference, most readers should find the articles on scripture and theology informative.

The influence of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) is apparent in many of the articles on the Book of Mormon. In the article on “Archaeology” (1:62), David J. Johnson offers a carefully worded statement on the paucity of direct confirmation of the Book of Mormon through the surviving remnants of material culture. Nevertheless, Hugh W. Nibley, unique polymath and inspiration to a generation of younger scholars, has written articles on the Book of Mormon’s Near Eastern background, temples, and the teachings of Brigham Young. In addition, to judge from the number of citations to *CWHN* (*Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*⁷), his influence is pervasive throughout the *Encyclopedia*.

Especially welcome are the articles on science and religion by Robert L. Miller and Erich Robert Paul. William E. Evenson’s article on “Evolution” (2:478) explains the main tension well enough, while John L. Sorenson (“Origin of Man”) properly notes a range of opinions on “the actual creation process” (3:1053) and reflects agreement among all Mormons that God created the human race.

A sampling of a few articles might lead one to characterize Mormons as arrogant and triumphalist. You know: “The sectarian world thinks such and such, but we know better.” Actually, I am glad that these authors are forthright and are allowed their own voice. No apologies here, no pusillanimous effort to curry favor with the world. Whatever happens during the next century, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* will stand as a strong statement of Mormonism’s faith position one hundred and sixty years after its origin.

Happily, there is no triumphalism in the descriptive articles which set forth with honesty and frankness the current state of affairs with respect, not to doctrine, but to Mormons as they actually are. For example, see Perry H. Cunningham’s article on “Activity in the Church” (1:13) or Lawrence A. Young’s on “Single Adults” (1:13). Most valuable are the data, supported by wonderfully clear graphs and tables, in the articles on “Vital Statistics” (4:1518) and “Social Characteristics” (3:1371). Inactivity, sex and age distribution, marital characteristics, adults with college experience, women in the work force, substance abuse—it is all here, not the Church as we would like it to be but as it is. On the other hand, the article on “Dating and Courtship” (1:357) sets forth only the ideal of

behavior, and one looks in vain on this occasion for a paragraph acknowledging that, as always, there is a gap between the ideal and the reality.

Sometimes I detect an antihistorical (or ahistorical) bias. On many topics where there has been an evolution of thinking (often the result of what we might prefer to call continuous revelation), the reader is frequently left uninformed. For example, an article on "Dance" (1:354) fails to mention one of the most interesting and revealing facets of that history: the tension between Church standards and some of the popular dances of different eras, including, at one time, the waltz. Truman G. Madsen's topical summary of the teachings of Joseph Smith has no chronological grounding. And for the Adam-God doctrine, a cross-reference sends us to Hugh Nibley's entry under "Young, Brigham: Teachings of Brigham Young" (4:1609), where practically nothing on the subject is found. (The better cross reference is to the final paragraphs and references in the article on "Adam" [1:17].) Actually, I like both the Madsen and Nibley articles; they are handy summaries. But they and many other articles ignore development and historical context. Diligent readers can find some of the chronological background in the historical articles, as well as in such entries as "Ward" (4:1541) or "Bishop, History of the office" (1:119).

The attitude in much of the *Encyclopedia* seems to be, "Give us the facts, ma'am, just the facts," or, more to the point, "Just tell us what the Church teaches now, not all the tortuous historical peregrinations." Certainly this is what we get under "Race, Racism" (3:1191). I don't quarrel with the emphasis but do call attention to it.

There are many gems in these volumes. They cannot all be mentioned, but I wish to express appreciation for Rex E. Lee on "Constitutional Law" (1:315); Stephen R. Covey on "Discipleship" (1:384); Howard M. Bahr on "Individuality" (2:680); Bruce C. Hafen on "Grace" (2:560) and "Justice and Mercy" (2:775); William G. Hartley on "Organization: Organizational and Administrative History" (3:1035); William O. Nelson on "Anti-Mormon Publications" (1:45); C. Terry Warner on "Accountability" (1:13), "Agency" (1:26), and "Truth" (4:1489); Mae Blanch on "Prayer" (3:1117); Michael Hicks on "Music" (2:793); Karen Lynn Davidson on "Hymns and Hymnody" (2:667); Bruce B. Clark on "Blessings" (1:128); Roger R. Keller on "Clergy" (1:288); Keith E. Norman on "Deification, Early Christian" (1:369); and authors of the several articles on literature. But, as when from the pulpit you begin to thank those who have assisted with a ward function, it is probably a mistake to start naming names. Each reader will have a different list of favorites.

There is far more here than just official Mormondom, far more than a slick public-relations presentation of the Church. The reader's aware-

ness of the larger scope of Mormon culture is enhanced by treatments of “Art in Mormonism” (1:73), “Artists, Visual” (1:70), “Folk Art” (2:516), “Folklore” (2:518), “KSL Radio” (2:800), literature, and music. One can look up “Garments” (2:534), and one can also read about missionary life, visitors centers, and welfare services. Not to be overlooked is David J. Cherrington on “Societies and Organizations” (3:1387), where one can find a clear statement of six important functions that can be fulfilled by unofficial organizations and publications.

We are told that the work is “intended for both the non-Mormon and the LDS reader” (1:lxix). That tells us something about the level at which these generally brief articles had to be pitched, along with the explanation that the authors were instructed to assume readers who were high school graduates or beginning college students. Of course, so long as the work is expensive and in English, it will not be available to most converts or even Church members. Still, it is a start and should do much good.

There are some surprising omissions (Parley P. Pratt’s plural marriages and the motivation behind his assassination) and inconsistencies. And despite all the best efforts of the production staff, a few typographical errors slipped through. Wulf “Barsh” (1:72) should be Barsch, Gilbert “Scharff” (1:52) should be Scharffs, and, if I am not mistaken, “Dennis” Bitton (3:1414) should be Davis Bitton.

The fact remains that the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* is a genuine landmark in publication and scholarship about the Church. As a standard reference source for basic information, and a point of departure for further discussion and research, it will serve us well. All who participated in its completion should be congratulated. Serious students of Mormonism, members or non-members, might well wish to forego ballet tickets for one season—or find an alternative rationalization—in order to purchase it.

NOTES

¹ James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–1975).

² Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971).

³ Vicky Burgess-Olsen, *Sister Saints*, Studies in Mormon History vol. 5 (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978).

⁴ *Supporting Saints: Life Stories of Nineteenth-Century Mormons*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and David J. Whittaker, Religious Studies Center Monograph Series, no. 1 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985).

⁵ *Deseret News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1974–1992).

⁶ Philip Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

⁷ *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. Stephen Ricks, and others (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1985–).