

Reid L. Neilson and Nathan N. Waite, eds., *Settling the Valley, Proclaiming the Gospel: The General Epistles of the Mormon First Presidency* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017)

LDS Church leaders were faced with a difficult task in the early years of settling in the Rocky Mountains. The Saints were troubled by the harsh climate, unpredictable relations with the native tribes, and the shadow of fear cast by the U.S. government. In their poverty, the bedraggled immigrants and refugees were not only admonished to continue missionary efforts and begin colonizing strategic locations but also called to build sacred temples in the wilderness. In an effort to simultaneously demonstrate internal solidarity and external economic stability and productivity, Brigham Young and his counselors published a series of fourteen “general epistles” from 1849 to 1856 (xiii).

Reid L. Neilson and Nathan N. Waite have compiled these fourteen documents, most of which were originally published in the *Deseret News*, into one volume. Neilson is Assistant Church Historian for the LDS Church, and Waite is an associate editorial manager for the Joseph Smith Papers Project. Neilson and Waite succinctly state the purpose of their work: “to make these General Epistles more accessible to our twenty-first century audience” (xiv).

To “make the past more accessible and friendly” (xviii), the editors begin *Settling the Valley, Proclaiming the Gospel* with sixty pages of historical background on the epistles themselves, including notes on the provenance, text, and context of each epistle. In the first chapter of the book, Neilson and Waite review the various pressures the Saints and their leaders experienced during this critical time and how the epistles addressed those issues. The next 216 pages are devoted to transcripts of

the epistles themselves. The editors enrich the proclamations with hundreds of footnotes, elaborating on the cultural and political nuances of the period and expanding on scriptural and biographical references.

The appendices begin with the December 1847 epistle from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, which the editors felt was fitting to include because “it was written within months of the settlement of the Great Salt Lake Valley and sets the pattern for the General Epistles that would follow once the First Presidency was reorganized that same month” (xiii–xiv). The second appendix is a biographical register containing sixty pages of biographical information on individuals mentioned in the epistles, listed alphabetically by surname. Similarly, the editors offer a geographical register as the third appendix for readers to learn more about locations the First Presidency discusses in these proclamations. The final fifty pages are devoted to an extensive bibliography and index, bringing the total page count to 430.

*Settling the Valley, Proclaiming the Gospel* will be helpful for anyone studying Brigham Young, mid-nineteenth-century Church leadership, and pioneer life in antebellum Utah Territory. Though the epistles can be found separately in archives and some are available online, having them all in one place, footnoted and indexed, will be a welcome resource to any researcher of the era.

—Gerrit van Dyk

Patrick Q. Mason and John G. Turner, eds., *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)

Generally speaking, Latter-day Saint knowledge of Church history after 1847 is spotty at best. The reason for this

deficit is that most Church members read little LDS history beyond what they get once every four years in Gospel Doctrine class, and, until recently, the curriculum covered little after the Saints' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley. Twentieth-century history, in particular, is largely uncharted territory, especially the latter half of the century. A few historians and biographers have tried to correct this deficiency in the past decade or so. The latter portion of Matthew Bowman's *The Mormon People* comes to mind, as do *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, by Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright; *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball*, by Edward L. Kimball; the last two sections of *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History*, published by BYU Studies; and a smattering of articles appearing in the *Journal of Mormon History* and other scholarly venues.

This means that the anthology *Out of Obscurity: Mormonism since 1945* should be of interest to many readers who are curious about this period of LDS history. As one of the editors, Patrick Mason, puts it in his introduction, "We need more robust, multifaceted, and analytical accounts of Mormonism in the period of its greatest growth, acceptance, and success as an increasingly global church" (5). This volume definitely succeeds in contributing to that goal. Divided loosely into four parts—"Internationalization," "Political Culture," "Gender," and "Religious Culture"—the book features essays by an impressive roster of scholars on an array of historical topics.

In part 1, Nathan B. Oman explores the international legal experience of the Church and what he calls a "Mormon theology of state." Taunalyn F. Rutherford then examines questions surrounding the Church's decision to expand into India.

Part 2, the longest in the anthology, includes essays by Patrick Mason on Ezra Taft Benson and modern conservatism; J. B. Haws on the presidential campaigns of George Romney and his son Mitt; James Dennis Lorusso on LDS media and the Mormon embrace of free enterprise; Max Perry Mueller on protests in and around Temple Square; and Neil J. Young on Mormon political involvement in issues surrounding same-sex marriage (primarily the ERA and Proposition 8).

In part 3, Amanda Hendrix-Komoto addresses modesty, sexuality, and race in the Mormon Pacific, with a specific focus on the Polynesian Cultural Center; Kate Holbrook looks at "Housework: The Problem That Does Have a Name"; Caroline Kline examines the softening and reimagining of Mormon male headship ideologies; and Kristine Haglund discusses the rise and popularity of the "Mormon Mommy Blogs."

Matthew Bowman begins part 4 with a look at the Evangelical countercult movement and Mormon conservatism, followed by Rebecca de Schweinitz's essay on the Mormon effort in the 1960s and 1970s to hold onto the "Chosen Generation." Sara M. Patterson then discusses the sesquicentennial celebrations of the Mormon arrival in the Salt Lake Valley. The final essay in the book is by John Turner, who explores the interplay between the Church, its history, and religious authority, building around a statement by LeGrand Richards to Juanita Brooks: "All the truth does not always need to be told" (323).

There is no central theme to this volume. It is a true anthology, a collection of stand-alone essays on a diverse assortment of topics in LDS history that share one commonality: post-World War II Mormonism. For those who find their knowledge of LDS history in this period lacking, *Out of Obscurity* provides a

sometimes fascinating, though uneven, glimpse of the LDS experience since 1945.

—Roger Terry

Loren D. Marks and David C. Dollahite, *Religion and Families: An Introduction*, Textbooks in Family Studies Series (New York: Routledge, 2017)

*Religion and Families* is a new book offered by two BYU professors: Loren D. Marks and David C. Dollahite, who both work in the School of Family Life. The work is meant to be used as an undergraduate textbook and is part of a series offered by Routledge, Textbooks in Family Studies, whose purpose is to “pair leading scholars with core topics in the field of family studies that are surprisingly underrepresented” (xv). One of these “core topics” is religion. Indeed, in the preface, the authors assert that in all their years of teaching courses that touch on the connection between families and religion, they had yet to find an undergraduate textbook addressing the topic. This book fills in this gap and claims to be “the first multidisciplinary text to address the growing scholarly connection between religion and family life” (i).

The work comprises thirteen chapters that rely on evidence from several academic studies, including some of the authors’ previous research. The work also provides data from more recent research done by the authors—namely,

interviews with about two hundred families from varying religious backgrounds.

The book begins with a broad discussion of the definition of religion and why religion matters in families. The following chapters focus on religion’s influence in some of the particular aspects of family life, like marriage and parenting. The authors then draw largely on their personal interviews to discuss the role of religion in Muslim and Jewish families in the United States. The final chapters discuss religion and the processes of coping with stress and forgiving within families.

Because the book was designed to be a textbook, it is full of helpful study aides, including a glossary, summary sections, and review questions. Although the book states that it is intended to be used by students and teachers (mainly in the field of family studies and religion but also in psychology, sociology, human development, social work, pastoral counseling, and even philosophy), anyone who is interested in the relationship between religion and families—and Latter-day Saints certainly fit in this category—will find this book interesting. It is grounded in research and evidence, but unlike some other scholarly works, the text is refreshingly accessible. The authors reference their own personal experiences at times, which make the book not only informative but also enjoyable.

—Alison Palmer