

ica, and others seriously question the existence of ancient Book of Mormon populations. As Book of Mormon scholarship has shifted focus, LDS missionary successes in Latin America have spurred the investment of resources away from American Indians in the United States. While Iber does note the impact of evangelization in Latin America, the conceptions of Lamanite identity in Iber's book appear quite static, and inter-ethnic relations among minorities are not developed. This lack of change may be a reflection of the failure of the work of LDS scholars to reach Spanish-speaking audiences. Yet before we can know this, more analysis of the variability of Mormon conceptions of otherness and its impact on inter-ethnic relations and Lamanite self-image is needed.

Iber's conclusion emphasizes the

distinctiveness of Hispanic experience in Utah and leaves his readers with the promise of more research:

Where else can an individual newly arrived from Central or South America instantly connect with the most powerful institution and network in the state simply by embracing a set of spiritual beliefs? Future research efforts by this writer (and hopefully others) will continue to shed light on this phenomenon. (136)

If subsequent work is of the caliber of Iber's first book, then we have much to look forward to from this scholar. Let us hope additional researchers will continue to follow his lead in applying the methods and insights of ethnic studies to Mormon experience.

Pluralism, Mormonism, and World Religion

Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion, edited by Eric Eliason (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 250 pp.

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THIS COLLECTION OF ELEVEN ARTICLES from a wide range of fields surveys current and historical Mormonism. It is targeted at an educated audience both inside and outside the traditional readership community in Mormon studies. Several of the essays are landmark studies by major scholars whose arguments go a long way, and church members will find them

fascinating, thoughtful reading. Two examples demonstrate why.

The premise of Richard Hughes's perceptive essay is that early Mormonism partook of a widespread movement in early nineteenth-century America to return to an earlier, more pure church—primitivist, in Hughes's scholarly description, pre-Apostasy in Mormon terms—the "restoration of all things," in other words. Unlike other movements, however, early Mormonism was more encompassing in its claims, and, thus, more intolerant of rival claims to salvation. It resulted, in Hughes's phrasing, in a "coercive vision" and a "violent antipluralism" through which "early Mormons ultimately rejected the ideal of religious pluralism as that ideal has been understood by most Americans" (39, 41).

In "The Populist Vision of Joseph Smith," Nathan Hatch argues that the Book of Mormon is a book of "profound social protest" (126). The underlying premise of the essay is that Joseph Smith is himself the author and that the book speaks of the themes and needs of his own experience of economic struggle and social exclusion. The Book of Mormon appealed greatly to those who were poor outsiders, like Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, and others who became members of the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. For Hatch, this helps to explain both the church's appeal and its growth, for a combination of populist entitlement and poverty led these young men to "throw their considerable energy into building a spiritual kingdom in opposition to the competitive and capitalist mores of Jacksonian America" (131).

Not all of the essays lived up to this standard, and on balance, the collection left several subjects untreated which would need to be addressed in order to serve the intended audience of serious, introductory readers, such as college students in religious studies or American history. If the family is the center of the church today, it is a topic which cries out for more attention in this book. Readers would justifiably expect current demographic information and wonder about the lack of discussion of sexual practices and gender roles in the church (including modern issues like ERA and defense of marriage campaigns, as well as the history of polygamy, about which every outsider already has heard). The church as an institution could also have been addressed with great benefit—its administrative development and power, its economic and political influence. (Richard Poll's interesting essay deals with these issues in passing, but it

dates from the 1980s.) The church in the international context would be well served by an essay as thoughtful and well-considered as the historical essays.

The disciplines of history and theology are represented by strong essays; organizational behavior, anthropology, and sociology leave us wanting more. This is not necessarily bad news—if the book achieves success as a college textbook, a revised edition would have many ways to expand.

One central question remains: has Eliason justified the title which calls Mormonism "an American World Religion"? This returns us to the volume's theme of where Mormonism has been (its history in New England, in frontier Nauvoo, and then in Utah) and where it is going. It could be argued that the claims of global success are still premature and, thus, perhaps too self-congratulatory or, more benignly, that they are simply optimistic boosterism. Although such claims may be seductive to scholars of Mormonism who would like to believe their field is expanding and important, other Christian Protestant churches certainly hold at least as much claim to the label of "world religion," not to mention the Catholic Church, whose global spread truly dwarfs Mormonism's. And comparing Mormonism to Islam is rather a stretch (at the very least because a millennium of history separates them).

Can a religion (or any institution) be, as the title claims, both American and global? If Mormonism is a world religion, it will have to escape its limitations in American culture. And yet, if we are persuaded by the arguments made in these essays, both a particular American cultural experience (as in Hatch's essay) and ideological and social boundaries (antipluralism, in Hughes's essay) have been essential to

Mormonism. Are they still so today? Is there room in a universalizing theology for multiculturalism and pluralism? Or do we tend to assume that the American, Mormon experience is (or ought to be) the universal experience? The very existence of such a book as this poses the question of whether there is room in Mormon studies for multiple points of view.

Any *Dialogue* reader who has not previously read these essays should

read them, not only for the essays themselves, but also to consider the question: "What collection of scholarly essays ought to represent the scholarly study of Mormonism to the broader academic community?" The value of this book is to make these views available in one volume, thus allowing the wise reader more easily to place Mormonism in its broader academic, American (and global) context.