

investigator concerning the Church. All too frequently the only offerings are anti-Mormon in tone and content—some of them subtly so—and are therefore very confusing for a seeker looking for a balanced view of a new religion. This information gap is exactly what the *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* fills best. Its small size is much less intimidating than the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), and its price is more affordable for public libraries.

Davis Bitton has done a great service by providing an introduction to the history of the Church and to its leaders and activities throughout the world. An initial perusal of the volume may indicate that the articles are similar to those in the *Encyclopedia*. However, Bitton presents the information from a fresh perspective, consistent with his lifelong ability to communicate clearly and concisely, whatever the topic. His explanation of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the United Order, and the Utah period of the Church are the finest summaries I've seen anywhere, and the articles on feminism and the roles of women exemplify Bitton's clear understanding of current issues in the Church.

A chronology precedes the dictionary listings, 40 percent of which are short biographies of leaders and prominent members of the Church. Immediately following the main body of the book is a further hallmark of Bitton's exacting scholarship—an excellent bibliography, representing his years of research in Church history. The

volume closes with three appendixes: a chronological listing of Church presidents, another of completed temples, and an interesting selection of "famous quotes" ranging from Joseph Smith to Chieko Okazaki.

Any weaknesses in the volume are minor, such as the choice of a few photographs that are too dark to be satisfactory. Without reservation I recommend the *Historical Dictionary of Mormonism* to members of the Church and encourage them, in the interest of missionary work and providing correct information for investigators, to recommend or donate Bitton's book to their local libraries.

—Gary Gillum

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*The Radiant Life*, by Truman R. Madsen (Bookcraft, 1994)

Madsen, a master teacher, seeks here to lead Saints to a fuller spiritual life, to stir in them a new attitude about their thoughts and actions. This work is similar in style to his book *The Highest in Us* (Bookcraft, 1978)—both are intended for general readership and are designed to uplift and inspire.

Highly readable, the book contains a potent mixture of theory, anecdotes, and solid doctrine based on scripture. A chapter on the Sabbath draws heavily from Madsen's knowledge of Jewish tradition and from his time spent in the Holy Land. His discussion on forgiveness will prove to be genuinely helpful for those seeking forgiveness as well as those seeking to forgive.

While Madsen's training in philosophy is evident in the chapter on light, the philosophical theory is enlightening and not overwhelming. In the chapter on human anguish and divine love, Madsen guides readers through the philosophical theories of good and evil and leaves them with a greater understanding of the mortal experience.

Madsen's insight into the purposes of gospel principles inspires a respect for his testimony, his ability to teach, and his knowledge of the gospel. He serves as an example of a radiant life.

—Jennifer Hurlbut

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*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*,  
by His Holiness John Paul II  
(Alfred A. Knopf, 1994)

A happy combination of question and answer, this book has been a best seller. We get a sense of informality as Vittorio Messori—chosen because of his previous writing and because he is a believer—asks the questions and John Paul II answers in words intended to be understood.

Always articulate, the Pope responds to questions one by one: How does the Pope pray? If God exists, why is he hiding? Why so many religions? The Pope often refers to the declarations of Vatican II, which he defends as “a great gift to the Church, to all those who took part in it, to the entire human family, and to each of us individually” (157).

A spirit of reaching out, of dialogue, breathes through these pages.

Muslims are respected for their devotion to monotheism. Other Christians are not disparaged. Catholicism, we are told, rejects nothing that is good and true. But the Pope does not agree that everything is equal—not for him the fashionable relativism of the 1990s. Buddhism, for example, he pronounces essentially escapist and atheistic. The Pope's duty, he says, is to proclaim Christ.

Some Catholic feminist and proabortion groups, to judge from their public pronouncements and demands, cannot be happy with his emphatic answer to questions about abortion. Legalization of abortion is

none other than the authorization given to an adult, with the approval of an established law, to take the lives of children yet unborn and thus incapable of defending themselves. . . . *It is not possible to speak of the right to choose when a clear moral evil is involved*, when what is at stake is the commandment *Do not kill!* (205)

The conclusion, which provides the title for the book, is a discussion of the biblical expression “Be not afraid”: “*The power of Christ's Cross and Resurrection is greater than any evil which man could or should fear*” (219). The gospel is demanding, but Christ “reveals that *His demands never exceed man's abilities*” (223).

Although Latter-day Saints will naturally sift and recognize where their answers would agree and where they might vary, those not of the Catholic faith can find inspiration in the Pope's words.

—Davis Bitton