Review

Reviewed Work(s): Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience by Richard Landes

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various rural communities or villages based on survey and interview data, like land and property owned, business conducted, incomes, social relations, and so on. I found the listing of studies—many of which were never published—informative and considered this section to be the most valuable portion of *Saints Observed*.

Four Classic Mormon Village Studies, is, in my opinion, the better of the two volumes. It consists of four substantive chapters that are previously unpublished ethnographies written by scholars: Edward C. Banfield (Gunlock, Utah 1951), Henri Mendras (Virgin, Utah 1951), Thomas F. O'Dea (Ramah, New Mexico 1950–1951), and Wilfrid C. Bailey (Pomerene, Arizona 1946–1947). Bahr concludes the book with an afterword that serves as a commentary and update on these ethnographies. The four chapters by the academically trained ethnographers are insightful, both in the information they present about Mormonism—particularly as it is manifested rurally—and in their descriptions of rural life. For instance, most of the ethnographies explain the strong desire among the citizens of the communities they studied to remain in those communities despite having lower incomes and limited opportunities for self-improvement. The villagers' desire to stay was rooted in tradition, wanting a sense of community, and a fear of the world outside. All of the ethnographies also noted that the Mormons in these communities were not homogeneous: some smoked or drank alcohol, many did not regularly attend religious services, and many did not hold orthodox Mormon beliefs. That none of these ethnographies were previously published, making them difficult to access for those who might be interested in them, is sufficient justification for their publication. Bahr has delivered those interested in Mormon Studies a gift by editing and publishing these little-known ethnographies.

For those interested in the study of Mormon village life, these two books have something to offer. I would not recommend reading the first four chapters in *Saints Observed*. Given the selection criteria, the overt bias in reviewing the narratives, and the limited insights that derive from them, readers may find that their time is better spent on the last two chapters in *Saints Observed* and on the ethnographies from *Four Classic Mormon Village Studies*.

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Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience. By Richard Landes. Oxford University Press. 2011. 499 pages. $36.95 cloth, $24.99 kindle.

Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience by Richard Landes is intriguing in that it did not deliver what I initially anticipated based on the title. While it does indeed discuss various forms of the

millennial experience at different times in different cultures, the author makes a conscious effort to exclude Jewish and Christian movements, which I expected to comprise the core of the volume. Landes' definition of millennialism as a type of apocalyptic movement that aims to establish a "perfect and just society *on earth* (however defined) and thereby, collective salvation for . . . [the] inhabitants" (339) allows for the inclusion of a wide range of non-religious movements as well. Landes has thus carefully surveyed world history to choose cases that illustrate the multifaceted nature and versatile content of millennialism. The case studies vary greatly, ranging in time from ancient Egypt (Pharaoh Akhenaten) to contemporary times (Islamist jihad), in content from religious to secular movements (Marxism and Nazism), and in social organization from tribal cultures (Xhosa cattle-slaying) to postmodern societies (UFO cults). This diversity offers the potential for a truly exciting intellectual adventure.

In the introductory chapter, Landes contextualizes his study by describing the theoretical framework within which he has conducted his investigation. He discusses the key features of millennial movements, possible motivations behind them, and significant points in their emergence. He also presents readers with a typology of millennial movements and, using animals to symbolize traditional responses to apocalyptic visions, illustrates the way they are socially embedded. The putative necessity of such a typology left me puzzled. This chapter is followed by specific case studies which are discussed logically, in a relaxed and enjoyable style. Throughout these chapters, the author unpacks the ways in which a wide range of social experiences have resulted in millennial thinking, from foreign occupation and colonization through general disillusionment with political and religious institutions to unexpected turns in the socio-cultural acceptance of apocalyptic visions initiated by the new millennium (based on the Gregorian calendar).

The most captivating sections, for me, explored ideological movements generally designated to fall within the boundaries of political science or intellectual and political history, such as Marxism, Nazism, and the ideology shaping the French Revolution. Landes explains how these movements also fell within the realm of human idealism and intellectual concerns with what was conceptualized as the perfect form of human social existence in a particular culture at a specific time period. He also demonstrates how easy it has been to "overcome the innate common sense of most people" (99) in times of distress, even on a systemic level, an aspect that seems to remain a feature of humankind. Deep between the lines, readers may feel encouraged to reflect on this feature, as well as to consider the potential threat it may represent.

I found Landes' attention to detail and persuasive argumentation on the parallels between these disparate movements one of the outstanding merits of the volume. He examines their wide array of cultural roots and

origins, their inherent logic, and their underlying structure. He also explores the dynamism with which such human constructs operate, delving into their perceived aims and the possible reasons for their ultimate failure, doing all this with ease and conviction. The depth of his research is indeed impressive, as is his ability to create a narrative that is truly academic and interdisciplinary, as well as a pleasant read.

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Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era. Edited by Ben Wright and Zachary W. Dresser. Louisiana State University Press, 2013. xi + 255 pages. $42.50 cloth; ebook available.

The essays in this book examine the "variable yet pervasive" influence of providential interpretations that helped Americans understand and explain their changing society during the mid-nineteenth century. Recent scholarship, most notably George Rable's *God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), underscored the central role of providence in influencing how Americans made sense of the Civil War. This volume expands the chronological scope in two important directions. By including the antebellum period, it highlights how various reform movements were impacted by or altered particular conceptions of providence and the millennium. By extending the discussion to the postwar era, the volume demonstrates how both southern whites and former slaves attempted to relate their changed social and political conditions to their providential and millennial beliefs. Although the collection ranges widely in its topical breadth—it comprises essays on Spiritualist reformers, antebellum literature, fugitive slaves in Canada, proponents of colonization in South Carolina, Native American religious revivals during the Civil War, theologically conservative southern Presbyterians, and several essays on emancipation and postwar race relations—the book coheres around the diverse understandings of providential activity in and through human history.

Politics and battles, of course, are foundational to the study of the Civil War, but this book further confirms the central role of religion necessary for developing a complete understanding of the conflict itself and for situating it within the broader era. As a part of the series "Conflicting Worlds: New Dimensions of the American Civil War," the volume's primary audience is Civil War specialists. However, scholars interested in religion in general and American religious history in particular will find useful insights that explain how certain groups conceived of the millennium. For instance, Robert K. Nelson explains how and why some Spiritualists, who initially sought radical political and