



1-1-2016

David G. Stewart Jr. and Matthew Martinich,  
*Reaching the Nations: International LDS Church  
Growth Almanac*

Carter Charles et al.  
noemail@byu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr2>

 Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Charles et al., Carter (2016) "David G. Stewart Jr. and Matthew Martinich, *Reaching the Nations: International LDS Church Growth Almanac*," *Mormon Studies Review*: Vol. 3 : No. 1 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr2/vol3/iss1/13>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mormon Studies Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

## Review Panel

David G. Stewart Jr. and Matthew Martinich. *Reaching the Nations: International LDS Church Growth Almanac, 2014 Edition*. Henderson, NV: Cumorah Foundation, 2013.

*Reviewed by Carter Charles, Gina Colvin, Wilfried Decoo, Matthew Heiss, Eustache Ilunga, Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, David M. Morris, Marcello Jun de Oliveira, Taunalyn Rutherford, Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree, and Walter van Beek*

### Introduction

SCHOLARS INTERESTED IN GLOBAL MORMON STUDIES need reliable global statistics. In the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the church's own meticulous internal statistics are not publicly available. Where, then, can researchers start to make sense of Mormonism's global proportions?

David Stewart and Matthew Martinich's *Reaching the Nations (RTN)* makes a major contribution to global Mormon studies (in this discussion, the strain represented by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) by providing reasonably accurate estimates of worldwide retention and activity rates. The sheer effort and potential utility of their work cannot be underestimated.

Evaluating the book as a whole, the *Review's* international panel of reviewers found strengths and weaknesses. Because of the panel's size,

*Mormon Studies Review*, vol. 3, 2016, pp. 147–162

© 2016 Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

Article DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18809/msr.2016.0112> Journal DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18809/mimr.21568030>

we are unable to include each author's full contribution in the print version of this composite review. However, long-form versions of reviews are available on the *Review's* website.<sup>1</sup> The first section of the composite review covers what the panel saw as the strengths of *RTN*, including its revised worldwide statistical picture. The second section identifies areas for improvement, including revising factual inaccuracies about specific countries and specific church units, rethinking explanations for why LDS growth or retention is lagging, using more rigorous sources, and recognizing and correcting America-centric interpretations.

These reviews themselves contribute to the emerging picture of Mormonism (in its Salt Lake City-administered variety) as a global religious phenomenon. The review panel includes professional academics at secular institutions, historians employed by the LDS Church, independent scholars, and LDS Church employees with no academic training but with a strong command of the facts on the ground. The panel therefore provides a snapshot of the various stages of development in Mormon studies around the world.

These reviews show that despite the LDS Church's administrative homogeneity, on a week-to-week basis its members around the world are in fact having very different kinds of religious experiences. Carter Charles's discussion of the overlap between church practices and voodoo in Haiti and Walter van Beek's discussion of the meaning of secularism in the church's European settings both point to ways in which regional context shapes church members' religious experiences and expectations. This is particularly relevant given the fact that the American social and cultural landscape continues to inform the religious horizons of the majority of leaders within the highest administrative levels of the LDS Church.

The multiple perspectives brought to bear on this ambitious global project leave us with unanswered questions. If the *RTN* estimate of 30 percent total activity for the entire church is correct—and the authors' success in estimating activity on a country-by-country basis suggests that it is—then of the 15 million LDS members worldwide, 4.5 million are

---

1. <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/periodical/msr-v3-2016/>. Not all of the reviewers have fuller versions of their reviews posted here.

considered active. This downward revision is a corrective to exuberant predictions of LDS Church growth that would locate the church's global significance in inevitable demographic expansion and the establishment of the world's next great religious tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps a new way of thinking about the LDS Church and its global significance is that while the church is a small religious tradition in worldwide terms, it is still a very large church. As a church with a worldwide membership, it achieves a remarkable degree of administrative, ritual, and cultural coherence. Is this coherence due to the dominance of American culture at the administrative levels? Or is it due to other factors such as the Mormon tradition's emphasis on religious practice and local organization, an emphasis that creates strong and recognizable patterns around the world even as it allows for tremendous cultural variation? Future researchers will be able to rely on the statistical cartography established by *Reaching the Nations* in order to chart in greater detail the ways in which the forces of homogeneity and heterogeneity transform the landscape of global Mormonism.

—Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, *University of Auckland*

---

2. The most famous proponent of this view has been eminent sociologist Rodney Stark, who has argued that Mormonism presents sociologists of religion with the opportunity to witness “an extraordinarily rare event, the rise of a new world faith,” and that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would “soon achieve a worldwide following comparable to that of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and the other dominant world faiths.” Rodney Stark, “The Rise of a New World Faith,” in *Latter-day Saint Social Life: Social Research on the LDS Church and Its Members*, ed. James T. Duke (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 9–27; Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 131–49. On the other side of this story is Rick Phillips, who in 2006 concluded that Mormon membership claims are inflated and that to call Mormonism an emerging “world religion” was premature. Rather, he said, the LDS Church is a “North American church with tendrils in other continents.” Rick Phillips, “Rethinking the International Expansion of Mormonism,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10/1 (August 2006): 53–68.

## Part 1: Contributions

---

*RTN* presents a much-needed statistical  
picture of global Mormonism

---

### *Brazil*

Anyone with an academic or intellectual interest in Mormonism will cheer the publication of *RTN*. Ambitiously setting out to “provid[e] the most comprehensive statistics, historical data, and analysis on LDS Church growth available at present,” this almanac is unquestionably both an asset and an important tool for Mormon scholars and students of Mormonism, as well as a watershed work for Mormon studies. . . .

The *RTN* chapter on Brazil is long and detailed. Although Brazil cannot boast nearly the same historical ties to Mormonism as the United States, Mexico, or Canada, its almanac entry is covered in 26 printed pages as opposed to 16, 12, and 11, respectively. This attention to detail for Brazil shows in the abundance of historical anecdotes and a cogent timeline on the evolution of the LDS presence in Brazil, possibly comprising the most comprehensive collection of facts and factoids on Brazilian Mormonism in any one publication. Additionally, its discussions are admirably open, candid, and insightful.

—*Marcello Jun de Oliveira, independent scholar*

### *France, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, French Guyana*

The quantitative and visible results of [Stewart and Martinich’s] endeavor are really impressive. It is a full-time job, and there is work for far more than two people.

—*Carter Charles, Université Bordeaux Montaigne*

### *Ghana*

Overall, this chapter gives a good, basic foundation for understanding the LDS Church in Ghana. As with all such works, almanacs, factbooks, and so on, this is a good but superficial beginning in that it covers a lot of ground in a few pages. In my opinion, such a work should be a

scholar's starting point and would, hopefully, direct such an interested person into primary source documents.

—*Matthew Heiss, LDS Church History Department*

### *New Zealand*

*RTN* is an ambitious project. Without the formal cooperation of the LDS Church, the gathering of LDS demographic and statistical information is complex.

—*Gina Colvin, University of Canterbury*

### *The Netherlands*

Here we have an honest and informed assessment of where the LDS Church stands globally. The fact that this had to be an outside job (though it's not an outsider's job) is revealing. When I worked in church leadership, especially during my term as stake president, I had more information at my disposal than these authors have. They have to work with membership statistics, general retention figures, and attendance estimates. How they would have loved to have had access to all the three-monthly reports that the church routinely collects from its stakes and units: accurate sacrament meeting attendance, Relief Society and Sunday School and priesthood meeting attendance, ward demographics, and the like. *RTN* fills a void the church itself creates, as it publicizes membership statistics only. . . . As such, this almanac is a correction—even if not voiced as such—of the official LDS use of figures, which aims at giving an impression of a steadily growing church, of an unstoppable force on a predetermined pathway of success. . . . Long reared on a tradition of success-as-evidence-of-truth, I recognize that new discourse on the church as a global player still has to be developed, and seemingly this new discourse is coming up from below, not from on high.

—*Walter van Beek, Tilburg University*

---

*RTN's statistical estimates are solid and usable*

---

*Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mongolia, Thailand, Cambodia*

*RTN* figures are reasonably accurate in the case of the LDS Church's Asia Area. For example, Stewart and Martinich correctly estimate that there are around 3,000–4,000 actively practicing Latter-day Saints in Hong Kong. In the case of Taiwan (10,000, or 17 percent of around 57,900), Mongolia (3,000, or 27 percent of around 11,000), Thailand (3,000, or 15 percent of 19,600), and Cambodia (3,500, or 27 percent of 12,800), *RTN's* estimates of actively practicing members are still generally high, but in the ballpark. Since active lay participation in the church community is one of Mormonism's defining features, these new figures are immeasurably helpful for scholars of Mormonism in its global iterations.

—*Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, University of Auckland*

*India*

In the Hyderabad Stake and the rest of the Bangalore Mission, average attendance numbers of roughly 100 in congregations is still a good estimate; however, the number of congregations has grown. Retention rates in India are relatively high, particularly for Asia, as the article correctly states. India reports 40 percent activity, and this could even be as high as 50 percent in some areas. One native church leader in the Bangalore Mission explained that in recent years the emphasis on quality rather than quantity in missionary work has yielded more committed members who have been determined to go on missions and marry in the temple, which has led to retention rates above 50 percent and some as high as 80 percent.

—*Taunalyne Rutherford, Claremont Graduate University*

## Part 2: Suggested Improvements

---

*RTN* contains numerous factual inaccuracies  
regarding countries and cultures

---

### *Belgium*

A few probes show that *RTN*'s general data also come from inaccurate sources or have been muddled in rewriting or in summarizing. For example, in the entry for Belgium (pp. 64–71), the geography reads that “Middle Belgium [is] also known as Wallonia” and that “mountains occupy Ardennes in the southeast of Belgium.” Wallonia is not “Middle Belgium” but comprises the whole southern half of Belgium; the Ardennes is not a different region from Wallonia, but a natural region situated in the southeast of Wallonia; there are no real “mountains,” but slowly rising hills and plateaus to about 2,200 feet above sea level. Next, the explanation in the entry on “other commonly spoken languages” is painfully inaccurate toward certain groups (while each of the “basic sources” gives correct information). The entry on Belgium further mentions that “the Spanish controlled Belgium from 1519 to 1713” (no, from 1556 on),<sup>3</sup> that “Napoleon invaded Belgium in the late eighteenth century” (no, he didn't),<sup>4</sup> that “Belgium colonized the Congo in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (no, only in part of the twentieth century), that “cigarette consumption rates are high” (no, they are among the lower rates in Europe),<sup>5</sup> and that tobacco belongs to “the major crops” (no, it's only 0.4 percent of total crops and is to disappear).<sup>6</sup> The entry lists

---

3. The error is frequent in English online sources, probably copied one from another. The error may have crept in as the year when Charles I decreed the juridical status of *new* overseas territories or when he became Charles V, Roman-German emperor. The region became Spanish when it was inherited by Philip II of Spain in 1556.

4. The French revolutionaries of the First Republic invaded the region in 1793 and annexed it to France. It was already well integrated into France when Napoleon took over.

5. Witold Zatoński et al., “Tobacco Smoking in Countries of the European Union,” *Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine* 19/2 (2012): 181–92.

6. See [http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/organisatie/statbel/informatie/statbel/-in\\_de\\_kijker\\_archief/in\\_de\\_kijker\\_2012/Tabak\\_in\\_cijfers.jsp](http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/organisatie/statbel/informatie/statbel/-in_de_kijker_archief/in_de_kijker_2012/Tabak_in_cijfers.jsp). See also <http://statbel>



a few significant medieval cities but fails to mention Bruges—the most famous one for tourists around the world. References in footnotes do not always reflect the content of the preceding sentences, so sources are not always clear (e.g., note 93 on page 65). Each of these problematic items may seem trivial, but an accumulation of little errors reveals a lack of rigor and undermines credibility of the whole.

—*Wilfried Decoo, Brigham Young University, University of Antwerp*

### *France*

It is forbidden by law in France to conduct ethnic surveys.<sup>7</sup> This means that, officially, no one knows the exact ethnic make-up of the country. It comes therefore as a surprise to see that the authors provide specific percentages for six major groups of peoples: French (80.9 percent), North African (9.6 percent), Sub-Saharan/Black African (4 percent), German (2.5 percent), Italian (1.5 percent), and Other (1.5 percent). Comments under those percentages specify that the “Other” category “include[s] Basque and immigrant groups from Africa, South East Asia, and the Caribbean” (p. 645). Very confusing! Where else in Africa could immigrants come from if they are not from North Africa and the Sub-Saharan/Black African part of the continent? I doubt the authors meant South Africa.

It is also just as confusing to learn that the 1.5 percentage of “Other” also includes Caribbean peoples. Which ones? Guadeloupeans and Martinicans? Or does it also include—as it should because the Caribbean comprises many more islands than just Guadeloupe and Martinique—immigrants from Haiti (like me) and the Dominican Republic, for instance?

—*Carter Charles, Université Bordeaux Montaigne*

---

.fgov.be/nl/binaries/-A5\_NL\_kerncijferslandbouw\_2013\_tcm325-228435.pdf.

7. Article 8 of the 1978 French law on privacy (also called “Law on Information and Liberties”) states, “It is forbidden to collect or process information of a personal nature which shows, directly or indirectly, the racial or ethnic origins, the political, philosophical, or religious opinions, or the Union affiliation of peoples; or which relates to their health or sexual lives” (my translation). In that regard, one mayor is under investigation for having acknowledged that his city has specific statistics making it possible for him to know how many Muslims attend the public schools.

*Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, French Guyana*

The background information provided for Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyana, and French Guyana suffers from minor to major inaccuracies. For example, a statement like “corruption scandals involving the [Haitian] president include kidnappings and an increasing number of murders” (p. 171) definitely needs to be backed by solid sources. Hearsay cannot do in such a case.

True, fewer and fewer Haitians practice voodoo, but it was already a massive understatement to estimate that at 2 percent; adding *only* takes us to the abyss of inaccuracies. Voodoo, which can take many forms, structures the life of most Haitians. Some of them find no problem attending a church meeting in the morning and a voodoo ceremony at night—and there are better sources than the *CIA World Factbook* to verify that kind of information.<sup>8</sup> The transition from one practice to another is possible because of historical connections between voodooism and Christianity and because the Haitians are very open and liberal when it comes to religion. This explains why the family ostracization that ensues when some people “forsake Voodoo religion and practices to join the [LDS] Church” must be a very marginal thing, but the authors are right in the case of Muslims in France.

—Carter Charles, *Université Bordeaux Montaigne*

---

8. A handy source in Mormon circles is Jennifer Huss Basquiat’s “Embodied Mormonism: Performance, Voodoo, and the LDS Faith in Haiti,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37/3 (Winter 2004). Since the authors’ policy seems to discount academic sources, one needs only to turn to this official LDS one that they cite on page 173 to read: “The difficulty for some members lies in having practiced both voodoo and traditional Christianity before joining the Church. . . . They did both before, and it’s hard to realize they can’t do both now.”

---

*RTN contains factual inaccuracies  
pertaining to LDS church units*

---

*India*

This entry is a fairly accurate picture of the LDS Church in India. However, the omission of the May 2012 formation of the Hyderabad Stake in the “LDS History” section lessens its credibility. The creation of the stake was an extremely historic and important event for members all over India. The information in the entry seems to reflect LDS Church conditions as of 2009, with a quick update in early 2012. As a result, the numbers for the branches in Delhi are low. Rather than an average of 50, there are now closer to 75 members on average who attend each week.

—*Taunalyn Rutherford, Claremont Graduate University*

*Democratic Republic of the Congo*

The entry contains various minor errors that could be corrected in future editions. For example, the city Uvira is listed as having no LDS congregations when it actually has two branches (one in Uvira and one in Kalunda), and the Kinshasa Mokali Stake was created in 2012, not 2013.

—*Eustache Ilunga, LDS Service Center for the  
Democratic Republic of the Congo*

*Ghana*

Minor inaccuracies exist, such as the misspelling *Boron*, which should be *Brong*,<sup>9</sup> and the omission of the first Area Authority Seventy to be called from Ghana, Elder Emmanuel Ohene Opare (called in 1998).

—*Charles and Mercy Sono-Koree, LDS Church  
history advisers in the Africa West Area*

During my review of the chapter on Ghana, I found a few inaccuracies: 125 people were baptized in Cape Coast on the first day, not 80 as

---

9. It should be noted that the *CIA World Factbook*, from whence the languages section seems to have been copied, also has *Boron*, but is followed by *Brong*.

reported on page 421. And rather than write that “some of the greatest growth occurred during the period when the Church was banned by the government . . .,” which is historically problematic since there was no overt missionary work or baptisms performed during the “Freeze” (the time when the LDS Church was banned in Ghana), I would say that great growth occurred as the result of the Freeze.

—*Matthew Heiss, LDS Church History Department*

---

*RTN's interpretations of LDS Church growth can be debated*

---

*Democratic Republic of the Congo*

The statement “Poverty appears to be the largest obstacle for the church’s progress in the country” can be relative, as in some instances it appears that poverty makes most Congolese people humble and receptive to the preaching of the gospel, which adds to the rapid growth of the church.

—*Eustache Ilunga, LDS Service Center for the  
Democratic Republic of the Congo*

*The Netherlands*

Secularism [cited in *RTN* as a major impediment to LDS Church growth] is a much more complex phenomenon that, at least in Europe, is not an opposition to churches but a structure that relegates denominations to a specific place within an overarching secular public place. Also, European secularism takes its distance from organized religion but not from individual spirituality in its many forms. Some functions of churches are well preserved as well, such as serving as a public moral conscience (not a strong point of the LDS tradition) or as grassroots organizations of care. But types of secularism differ within Europe, and this dynamic is not given much room in the present volume. Thus, some obvious differences between countries tend to disappear: Estonia is in fact much more secular than its Lithuanian neighbor, like the difference between Slovenia and Slovakia. As secularism is a pervading phenomenon in

Europe (and a rising one in the United States), this could have been treated with more empathy.

A second point is the notion of barriers to growth. Secularism has been mentioned, but other factors routinely invoked are nominalism (the fact that people identify with a church without practicing) and deep adherence to a specific Christianity, like Roman Catholicism. If all three—secularism, nominalism, and adherence—are barriers, then not much remains as the population to missionize. My experience is that especially the “nominalists,” or marginal members of dominant denominations, form the most fertile recruiting ground, at least among the non-immigrants. Though these people are usually not looking for another organized religion, they are open to change.

—*Walter van Beek, Tilburg University*

#### *United Kingdom*

The commentary offered some reasonable suggestions, but while it seemed like a flowing narrative, it again neglected sources or references. In fact, it is curious as to how some of the conclusions can be arrived at, especially where future growth or national outreach is possible. The article highlights three cities where most growth can be predicted, but two of these are small towns. Ellesmere Port and Margate are in serious decline both in terms of industry and business, and it is most difficult to see how an LDS expansion can take place in these conditions. I have to also challenge the assumptions of high temple attendance and the speculating of prospective temples in Birmingham and Cardiff, as well as one in Scotland. This is not the message of area and local leaders.

—*David M. Morris, Durham University*

---

#### Sources used lack scholarly rigor

---

#### *United Kingdom*

Despite so much being available in terms of primary and secondary sources, it is the *LDS Church News* that underpins the United Kingdom

entry. This is disappointing considering the rich array of research and sources on British Mormonism. In fact, considerable amounts of work have been done at different levels of study from the lay historian narrative to academic studies up to the doctoral level. For example, consulting the *Manuscript History of the British Mission* provides detailed statistics between 1837 and 1900. For example, by 1852 there were more than 32,000 Latter-day Saints in Great Britain, more than the rest of the worldwide church. The fact that emigration was being promoted may explain why so many Latter-day Saints were found in Utah by 1870 (a fact highlighted in the article). However, while there were around 110,000 British convert baptisms between 1837 and 1900, only around 46,000 of those emigrated, and not all to Utah. The article does not reflect correctly these figures. Furthermore, historical data are available from *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, which published the figures for the branches, missions, and pastorates for 130 years (1840–1970). There is no reference to the *Star* or apparently other historical sources. This is disappointing, as the whole article lacks an authoritative scholarly base. Most of the citations relate to leadership changes or events gleaned from the *LDS Church News*. Moving from the history element to the commentary, I was excited to see the beginnings of new insight into the behavior and culture of LDS members.

—David M. Morris, Durham University

*General overview of Reaching the Nations, volume I*

*Church News* is the main source for data and events. Over the whole volume, *RTN* refers to 2,123 articles in *Church News*, 236 in the *Ensign*, and 34 in the *Liahona*. However, this main reliance on PR-inspired church publications is problematic. First, it results in a choppy presentation of local church history, with possible gaps. Some rubrics in the entries read like a series of erratic snapshots, dictated by the fortuitous availability of a *Church News* or *Ensign* article. Negative events, such as major internal crises or conflicts, which could be revealing for an analysis of hurdles in development, are basically missing. Second, one must wonder how accurate the information is. For example, from a *Church*

*News* article about Belgium, *RTN* claims that 80 people were baptized in 1888.<sup>10</sup> Research has shown this to be implausible.<sup>11</sup> . . .

Why not have also turned to the scholarly literature on aspects of the international church? Nearly all documents are a few clicks away. From its start in 1974 through 2012, the *Journal of Mormon History* published eighty-two scholarly articles about the LDS Church in foreign countries, many of which deal also with present-day Mormonism. *RTN* does not cite a single one, nor any from *BYU Studies*, which also carries a fair amount of articles on the international church. . . .

In the same vein, when dealing with Mormon membership developments, any serious approach would refer, for example, to Thomas Murphy for Guatemala; to Henri Gooren for Nicaragua; to Mark Grover, David Knowlton, or Raymond Tullis for Latin America in general; to Caroline Plüss for Hong Kong; to John Hoffmann or Jiro Numano for Japan; to Walter van Beek for the Netherlands; to Ian Barber and David Gilgen or Marjorie Newton for New Zealand; to Tamar Gordon for Tonga; to Christian Euvrard for France; and so on. The scholarly basis for *RTN*'s announced analysis of "issues that have favored and hampered growth in the past" is therefore extremely weak.

—Wilfried Decoo, *Brigham Young University, University of Antwerp*

---

10. Chris Miasnik, "The Church in Belgium: Membership Has International Flavor," *Church News*, December 7, 1996. Note that *RTN* muddles the title of the article: "The Church in Belgium: Membership has international flavor in Church version of United Nations."

11. An Burvenich, "Het ontstaan van de Kerk van Jezus Christus van de Heiligen der Laatste Dagen in België, 1861–1914" (master's thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1999). The story is based on a single sentence in Mischa Markow's reminiscences, more than forty years after the alleged event, and on his own hearsay from a single source decades earlier. As far as could be determined, mission records and missionary journals of the time make no mention of these baptisms.

---

America-centric perspectives weaken  
*RTN*'s accuracy and analysis

---

*India*

The “Cultural Issues” section reads like a returned-missionary report rather than the perspective of a native member and reveals an American bias. This America-centric perspective is also evident in the general information on India stemming from the fact that the main source seems to have been the CIA website referenced in the bibliography. The article is helpful in giving one view of India and the condition of the LDS Church there, but it should be seen as no more than what it is: an encyclopedic reference.

—*Taunalyn Rutherford, Claremont Graduate University*

*Brazil*

For an academic reference work, the quality and analysis of the collected data leave much to be desired. Most of the references (250 out of 258) for the chapter refer to one single official LDS Church source or to church publications (3 out of 5). All of the populational data are sourced to the US State Department (5 out of 258), all both outdated and wrong. Other data mentioned, such as membership in other Christian denominations, are never sourced. Crucial data from the 2000 Brazilian Census are mentioned but only briefly discussed and never sourced, and the more updated data from the 2010 Brazilian Census are entirely ignored. Published analyses on Mormon populational data from both the 2000 and 2010 Census are also ignored. Historical trends that inform religious shifts from census and statistical data available from 1940 to 2010 are also ignored. Information on social, racial, and cultural issues are never sourced and include some demonstrably wrong, obviously Americentric misconceptions. Many assertions specifically about the LDS experience in Brazil are neither sourced nor databased.

—*Marcello Jun de Oliveira, Independent Scholar*



*New Zealand*

The New Zealand chapter demonstrates how cautious researchers need to be when dealing with both cultural diversity and national statistics. It is a rule of thumb when writing about national characteristics that authors ensure that they are speaking *to* the citizens of that nation, even if only imagining them as an audience. In doing so, researchers oblige themselves to become participants in, rather than simply observers of, unfamiliar cultures. This volume, while impressive in breadth, demonstrates how vital local knowledge and contextual understanding are. It appears that while sourcing population data, the authors have attempted to make sense of our data for an American audience who might think more in terms of blood quantum than New Zealand does. This would explain the “Mixed” and “Other” and “Unspecified” ethnic categories they listed.

Additionally, it is important to follow local conventions for referring to non-Anglo groups. *Māori* is always written with a macron, and *Tongan*, *Samoan*, *Hindu*, and so on, refer to peoples with discrete identities and so do not typically take the English suffix *-s*.

Not only do the sources need to be much clearer, statements such as “Maori is spoken proficiently by a quarter of the ethnic population” should be qualified. As New Zealand is a country that is home to diverse “ethnic” groups, it is difficult to discern exactly to whom the authors are referring. Notwithstanding, 25 percent “proficiency” would be highly desirable but is equally highly improbable.

Overall, we applaud the authors for such noble aspirations and are impressed with the amount of backbreaking work so clearly put into this almanac. However, we would suggest strongly that in following editions the authors enlist local researchers where possible in order to provide a more nuanced and less American-centric perspective on the international growth and development of the LDS Church.

—*Gina Colvin, University of Canterbury*