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Eldin Ricks, *Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works*

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Abstract Review of *Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of LDS Standard Works* (1995), by Eldin Ricks.

Eldin Ricks, *Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works*. Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995. v + 899 pp. Paperback, \$21.95.

Reviewed by Gary P. Gillum

In the world of words and scholarship few men are respected as much as the lexicographers and lexicologists who persevere with the daunting task of compiling dictionaries, concordances, and indexes. They are largely unsung heroes whose patience and diligence are little understood by others, but at the same time are appreciated because of the scholarly usefulness of the tools they compile. Their work seems to be the opposite of most scholars, who attempt to bring the chaos of individual words into the order of language and of a new creative work. They can best be described in a reflection by the dean of all lexicographers, James Murray, the compiler of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED):

How often does man hairsplit, and sever, and part asunder what Heaven has made a whole! . . . Man is fond to classify, to separate, to discriminate, to set apart in little cells of memory the mass of facts he gathers from the field of nature.¹

Eldin Ricks has also followed this lexicological tradition by parting “asunder what Heaven has made a whole,” but his effort began when computer technology enabled him to do so more readily. *Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works* was begun in 1971 as a database that resulted not only in this present work, but also served as the basis for the *Topical Guide to the Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, for *LDS View*, and for other recent concordances which are available in electronic formats. But unlike the computer databases, this concordance is portable and can be taken any-

¹ K. M. Elisabeth Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words: James Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 47.

where—and without being turned on. As a reference librarian, I recall the initial enthusiasm my colleagues and I felt several years ago when databases and CD-ROM products began to solve many of our research dilemmas in the Harold B. Lee Library. Unfortunately, as the software continued to proliferate and the hardware became overburdened, both librarian and researcher increasingly returned to the books as being faster and easier to use. This may seem like going back in time to the Luddite frenzies of one hundred years ago or seem to be an answer to the Unabomber's concerns, but in fact it is a course correction seeking balance between the ease of traditional research tools and the power of electronic formats.

When FARMS first gave me a copy of the book to review, I immediately took it to my office and made room for it on the shelf next to George Reynolds's *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*. It seemed only natural to do so, for the Reynolds volume was the first Latter-day Saint reference book I ever purchased and has served me well both personally and as a librarian at the reference desk. I then began to compare the two books "thoroughly" and to talk about this new tool with my colleagues, one of whom was in the process of writing a review on George Reynolds.² Ricks's book will become at least equal in stature to that of Reynolds's concordance and will probably replace it, given that it includes all three Latter-day Saint scriptures, and not just the Book of Mormon. Moreover, John Bluth's *Concordance to the Doctrine and Covenants*,³ compiled in the 1930s, is out of print, along with Lynn M. Hilton's *A Concordance of the Pearl of Great Price*.⁴ In 1977 R. Gary Shapiro compiled *An Exhaustive Concordance of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price*,⁵ having completed it in four years with the aid of a computer. With Shapiro's

² See Bruce Van Orden's review of Reynolds's *Book of Mormon Dictionary*, in this issue, pages 51–60.

³ John Bluth, *Concordance to the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1945, 1979).

⁴ Lynn M. Hilton, *A Concordance of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: BYU Extension Publications, 1960).

⁵ R. Gary Shapiro, *An Exhaustive Concordance of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes, 1977).

compact work out-of-print, however, Ricks's concordance is now the only one to bring the three Latter-day Saint standard works together. In addition, Ricks's *Concordance* is the only one based on the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

Each of these compilers has left out common words that are not necessary for the average reader and student of the scriptures. Those who wish to do word studies are encouraged to use computer databases. But Reynolds included one detail everyone else missed—a short definition of proper names at the beginning of the list (e.g., “*Abinadi*: A Nephite prophet, whom the Lord raised up to reprove the wicked people of King Noah for their sins. He was burned to death in the city of Lehi-Nephi about B.C. 150.”) Like all concordances preceding his, Ricks's concordance suffers from not having a little more order within each word list. Whether done by hand or by computer, these lists must necessarily list all appearances of a word in some kind of order. The order found in *Ricks's Concordance* is by book in the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price and by section in the Doctrine and Covenants. This method makes it impossible to separate the many instances of “great” from a few instances of “Great Britain.” Or to separate “young” from “Brigham Young,” “smith” from “Joseph Smith,” and “snow” from “Lorenzo Snow.” It is a tedious process to separate the apples from the oranges. On the other hand, it is still a researcher's joy to be able to see the usage of words in our three Latter-day Saint scriptures.

I need once again to invoke the thoughts of James Murray, words which just as easily could have been uttered by Eldin Ricks or George Reynolds, both of whom faithfully labored for twenty-one years on their projects:

I never could have stood the work that I have done at the Dictionary, and the special difficulties which threatened at times to overwhelm me without earnest prayer every morning for help to do my work. . . . And many a time, unknown to anybody, . . . when absolutely at the end of my own resources in dealing with entangled & difficult words, when all alone at night in the Scriptorium, I have shut the door, and thrown myself on the floor absolutely on God's help, and

asked him to use me as an instrument to do what He knew to be right; and I believe I have never asked in vain.⁶

All these men would surely hope that we as students of the scriptures would be equal to the results of their laborious work, faith, sacrifice, and reliance on the Spirit for help and guidance.

⁶ Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words*, 309.