

economic life. It is not comprised of individual articles on certain topics, like an encyclopedia or dictionary, nor is it arranged in chronological order, like an almanac. For example, if one were looking for information on how the Dead Sea Scrolls community played a part in the daily life of first century Jews, one must turn to the index, which then leads to a handful of pages that discuss this issue.

This book does not compare with other reference works. For example, *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Routledge, 1998) provides several articles, with bibliographies, on different topics, arranged in alphabetical order. Patrons are typically pointed to reference books as a starting point for their research in part because many reference works offer bibliographies that lead to further sources. *Daily Life in the New Testament* does have a bibliography, but it is not organized by subject. Instead, it lists resources arranged by the author's last name, which makes it difficult to find additional sources on a specific topic.

Daily Life in the New Testament is recommended for any library's general collection, but not their reference collection. It provides a brief, up-to-date, and scholarly overview of the socio-historical setting of the area where Christianity and Judaism claim their heritage.—Garrett B. Trott, *Reference/Instruction Librarian, Corban College & Graduate School, Salem, Oregon*

Disasters, Accidents, and Crises in American History: A Reference Guide to the Nation's Most Catastrophic Events. By Ballard C. Campbell. Facts On File Library of American History. New York: Facts On File, 2008. 461p. acid free \$95 (ISBN 978-0-8160-6603-2).

Unpleasant though it may be to contemplate, the brutal reality is that death, destruction, and despair are just as much a part of the American Story as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is made abundantly clear by the 201 main entries, eight essays, and two appendixes of this recent offering. Covering a broad spectrum of both natural incidents (floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and so on) and results of human folly (wars, depressions and financial panics, riots, and others), this volume serves as an effective antidote to nostalgia. While not explicitly stated as such, the tacit message is that the "good old days" exist only in our imaginations.

Editor Ballard Campbell, a professor of history at Northeastern University in Portland, Maine, states in the introduction, "The goal of this book is to describe the most destructive, influential, and fascinating of these events" (xii). Between Acts of God and the hand of man, Campbell and his contributors had a wealth of material upon which to draw. Ultimately, it was decided that the selection criteria would consist of the "dramatic, memorable and consequential" (xiii). Thus there is coverage of the well known (Johnstown Flood, Great Chicago Fire) and the obscure (1832 New York City cholera epidemic, a disease that few today are familiar with); the long ago (lost colony of Roanoke, Virginia in 1590) to the seemingly yesterday (2005's Hurricane Katrina).

Clearly and concisely written, each entry is signed by its author. Unfortunately, there is no contributors page, so their individual qualifications cannot be ascertained. Campbell himself appears to have been a good choice to helm this project: the author of a number of works on the American past, he is currently president of the New England Historical Association and a distinguished lecturer for the Organization of American Historians.

A number of interesting features bear mentioning. First, the observant reader will note that the subtitle reads "Reference Guide," rather than "Encyclopedia" or "Companion" or some other synonym for works of this nature. Rather than the standard alphabetical arrangement, the contents are listed chronologically, year by year, in the order of their occurrence. Secondly, the table of contents appears in two formats: one follows the timeline layout of the book itself, while the other is topical, so that like events are grouped together under such headings as "Sensational Crimes" and "Ship and Maritime Accidents." Additionally, each entry carries a shaded "Factbox" that highlights the most important details of the event in question, just the thing for ready reference questions. Lastly, the aforementioned essays throw a spotlight on the alphabet soup of federal government "doomsday" agencies, such as FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). One quibble is that the book is poorly illustrated. What few graphics there are appear only in black and white and are generally so small as to be of little use in helping the reader understand the gravity of the situations presented.

A diligent search of the reference literature reveals no other work of this scope within the last ten years. Having said that, Checkmark Books, an imprint of Facts On File, seems to have cornered the market on calamity titles, each with a very specific focus: *Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Cyclones* (2000); *Shipwrecks* (1996); and *Man-Made Catastrophes* (revised ed., 2002) are a few examples. *Disasters* itself would be a fine addition to the American history collections of both public and academic libraries.—Michael F. Bemis, *Assistant Librarian, Washington County Library, Woodbury, MN*

The Eighties in America. Ed. by Milton Berman. Decades. Pasadena, Calif.: Salem, 2008. 3 vols. alkaline \$364 (ISBN 978-1-58765-419-0).

The purpose of *The Eighties in America* is to explore the "iconic personalities, issues, and moments of the decade" (ix). This three volume collection, edited by Milton Berman, professor emeritus of history at the University of Rochester, is a companion set to *The Sixties in America* (Salem, 1999), *The Fifties in America* (Salem, 2005), and *The Seventies in America* (Salem, 2006). *The Eighties in America* is a comprehensible, thorough, and readable examination of the decade synonymous with Reaganomics, compact discs, Madonna, and MTV.

The Eighties in America contains 663 alphabetically arranged articles ranging in length from one to six pages.