

Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations. Ed. by J. Gordon Melton. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clío, 2011. 2 vols. acid free \$189 (ISBN: 978-1-59884-205-0).

Religious Celebrations is a two-volume set from ABC-Clío which purports to offer “the most comprehensive coverage of religious holidays ever assembled” (back cover). With over eight hundred entries, it may be hard to quibble with the comprehensive claim. Unfortunately, what it provides in quantity does not make up for its lack of quality. Edited by J. Gordon Melton, professor of American religious history at Baylor, and written by Melton and ten other contributors, this resource is poorly written, poorly researched, and poorly edited. Articles contain numerous typographical errors, punctuation mistakes, and grammatical inconsistencies; for example, “Diwali is the most observed holiday in India It [sic] is especially important for Hindus, but other communities have developed parallel celebrations, just as different groups in North America celebrate the Christmas season, though pouring [sic] widely variant content” (255). Also perplexing is the coverage of the encyclopedia. The Bahá’í faith is more comprehensively discussed than Islam, for example, undoubtedly due to the fact that one of the contributors is a Bahá’í expert, but the gaps are disappointing. Choice of authorship for individual entries is another puzzling aspect of this set. Contributors to this volume include a Jewish historian, but many of the articles dealing with Jewish religious celebrations—including Hanukkah and Passover—are written by Dr. Melton.

Most troubling is the apparent lack of research on many of the subjects. Non-Christian topics rely heavily on articles taken from the Internet, with little indication of other sources used. The article on the Nepalese holiday of Gathemangal, for example, lists one reference, www.nepalhomepage.com, and the essay itself is nothing more than a liberal paraphrasing of the information from the website. The entry on Ethiopian Easter, heavily paraphrased from an article from the Palestine Monitor website, lists as its only other reference a book published in 1970.

There are several other good resources for holidays and celebrations, including Facts on File’s *Encyclopedia of Holidays and Celebrations* (2006) and *Holidays, Festivals and Celebrations of the World Dictionary, 4th ed.* (Omnigraphics, 2009). The latter is considered a standard reference in this area and is less costly than *Religious Celebrations*, and libraries would be well advised to invest their acquisitions money here. *Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations* cannot be recommended.—Amanda Sprochi, *Health Sciences Cataloger, The University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri*

Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions. Ed. by H. Bradford Hawley. Salem Health. Ipswich, Mass.: Salem, 2011. 3 vols. alkaline \$395 (ISBN: 978-1-58765-776-4). Online access included with purchase of print.

This is the first edition of this title. *Salem Health: Infectious*

Diseases and Conditions is written for the non-specialist. The essays are written by medical professionals. *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* alphabetically arranges 650 essays covering all aspects of infectious diseases and their prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. The essays also offer historical and technical background with discussions of discoveries, developments, and prognoses. Essays range from the common, such as influenza, to the rare, such as necrotizing fasciitis, or flesh eating bacteria. This work also includes essays reflecting the global reach of infectious diseases. It does this by exploring such topics as “emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, developing countries, epidemics and pandemics, endemic diseases, tropical medicine, globalization, neglected tropical diseases, water quality and treatment, sanitation, and travel” (ix). Over two hundred black and white photographs help illustrate the text.

Essays, which range in length from one to five pages, begin with ready reference top matter. Helpful information at the end of each entry is contained in “Further Reader,” which lists sources, often with annotations, and “Web Sites of Interest,” which provides a list of authoritative websites. Sidebars are also included in many of the entries. The sidebars contain key terms and facts, newsworthy topics, and questions to ask your health care provider.

A special feature of *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* is the nine appendixes at the end of volume three. Two that stand out are the glossary, which provides hundreds of definitions of commonly used scientific and medical term, and an annotated websites appendix, which reflects the importance of the Internet to general education in infectious diseases. There is also a pharmaceutical list that is categorized by the type of drug. The last two sections that make *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* different than others are the “Time Line” which “offers a chronological overview of major developments in infectious diseases from 1700 B.C.E. to the present” (xi), and the “Biographical Dictionary” of scientists in infectious diseases.

I compared *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* to Brenda Wilmoth Lerner and Lee Lerner’s *Infectious Diseases: In Context* (The Gale Group, 2008). This comparative source, while informative, only contains 250 entries. Space constraints led the editors to limit entries only to those effecting human health. Two benefits to *Infectious Diseases: In Context* are color photographs and a “Words to Know” sidebar of essential terms that enhance the readability and understanding of the entry. The items really enhanced the look of *Infectious Diseases: In Context*, and in this respect, I would favor Lerner and Lerner’s title. However, their title, while also written by experts, is geared more towards high school students. The audience for *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* is science and pre-med students, students in epidemiology and public health, students of global and tropical medicine, and public library patrons. Its entries go into much greater detail and are written at a higher level, while still being understandable. *Salem Health: Infectious Diseases and Conditions* is written and organized in a very easy to understand manner.