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F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*

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Title

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Abstract *Review of Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (1988), by F. Richard Hauck.

F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988. xvi + 239 pp., with maps, diagrams, charts and index. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Mark V. Withers

This critique is a general overview of a recent study of Book of Mormon geography. Having minimal book review experience, I have endeavored to give a general overview based on subjective standards rather than objective standards. I have decided to use the following categories in my discussion: premises, significance, understandability, technique, and diagrams.

The theme which was well brought out in the text was that this book is not the end but merely a study which is in fact in its infancy. Mr. Hauck explained clearly that this study is not to prove the Book of Mormon but rather to aid in studying it. Another premise that he established besides the two already mentioned is that the geographic information in the Book of Mormon is far from all inclusive and that the results are based on likelihoods and probabilities rather than concrete facts. Nevertheless, even with a lack of many crucial historical and geographical facts, the premise that a systematic approach could possibly go far in putting to rest the present speculations and theories concerning the whereabouts of Book of Mormon geography is a sound one and appears to have aided Mr. Hauck in his studies.

What I read in this book could be helpful as a tool in studying the Book of Mormon. As I read the Book of Mormon and located the mentioned areas on the maps, I gained a greater appreciation of what really happened, the distances traveled, and the terrain involved. Having served my mission in Guatemala, I was able to picture the areas described in the book. However, it may be very confusing for all but the technically minded to read this book and picture exactly what Hauck is describing, unless the reader has actually personally seen the areas described, or has seen photographs or drawings of such areas. For example, if readers were able to see pictures of the rugged mountain chains, the narrow pass along the coast where agriculture is so abundant, the valley passes, the east sea region near Lake Izabal, or any of the areas described, their understanding would be that much more clear. Finally, although not seeking to "prove" the Book of Mormon true, it seems that a reader who already deems

the Book of Mormon true will gain added insight as the geography of what he or she already believes in unfolds.

The understandability of this book depends upon the efforts of the reader. I noticed that what Hauck said at the beginning of his book is true where he stated that the book was addressed to the scientific reader as well as the average reader who uses the book as a guide to studying the Book of Mormon. I found myself lost in technicalities quite often and it seemed like half the book was an introduction or a thorough description of the second half, which seemed to be the meat of the study. The study leans more toward the scientific reader than the average reader who is merely seeking some answers to make the study of the Book of Mormon easier. However, if the average reader makes an effort in understanding this book, I think it would be understandable for him or her as well.

The technique, as described earlier, is a complex systematic approach. Although perhaps more technical than other studies, Hauck's book seems to have used a systematic approach in a workable manner. The scripture passages are included for corroboration by the reader, as well as lengthy discussions of the system. The diagrams use facts and assumptions and add clarity to the technical descriptions contained in the texts.

Overall, I found the present book enlightening, although somewhat technical. I enjoyed reading about the events in the Book of Mormon in their geographic context. This volume will assist in future studies of the Book of Mormon.