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Brenton G. Yorgason, *Little Known Evidences of the Book of Mormon*

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Abstract Review of *Little Known Evidences of the Book of Mormon* (1989), by Brenton G. Yorgason.

Brenton G. Yorgason, *Little Known Evidences of the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Covenant, 1989. 49 pp. \$3.95.

Reviewed by Paul Y. Hoskisson

Because this booklet, by its own admission, is adapted from a "Know Your Religion" lecture given February 1988 in Scottsdale, Arizona (see the title page), the reader does not expect documentation and therefore is pleasantly surprised with what is given. The book is divided into three parts. The author's feelings toward the Book of Mormon and his autobiographical conversion story form the first part. Why this is included among "little known evidences" is never explained. The material presented in the second part treats the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the nineteenth century. It is unfortunate that what meager new information is presented here (most of the sources quoted have long been in print) is not better documented.

While the title of this booklet seems to have been drawn from the third part, the bulk of the material in this last section is not new, but has admittedly been taken from other sources. Lamentably the information was used uncritically, mixing glaring factual errors and unsupported statements with some few accurate facts. For instance, on page 35 it is stated that "Syrian, Hebrew, Ancient Egyptian, Arabic, and Aramaic" comprise the Semitic language family. This list is not only too exclusive but also too inclusive: many of the East Semitic (Assyrian and Babylonian) and some of the more important West Semitic (Phoenician and Ethiopic) languages have not been included. And Ancient Egyptian is not a Semitic language but rather belongs to the Hamitic family of languages. Both language groups belong to the Hamito-Semitic, or Afro-Asiatic, group, but Hamitic is not Semitic. In addition, there is no such language as "Syrian." Probably Syriac was meant, which is a dialect of Aramaic. (Or was it Assyrian?) On the same page it is stated that Syrian, Ancient Egyptian, and Aramaic "are considered *dead* languages, and are no longer in use." Aramaic is not dead. Several groups still speak dialects of Aramaic. It is also claimed on the same page that "the Book of Mormon was originally written in the Egyptian language, although 'reformed'," with Mormon 9:32 as a reference. Although the Book of Mormon informs us that Mormon used an Egyptian script on the plates, the underlying language could have been

Hebrew. (To cite a modern example, Yiddish, a language closely related to German, is written in the Hebrew script.) The rest of the booklet argues from the nonposition that it therefore contains Semitisms, specifically Arabisms and not the more likely Hebraisms.