



Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

Volume 4 | Number 1

Article 58

1992

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*

Rand H. Johnson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Johnson, Rand H. (1992) "Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 58.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol4/iss1/58>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011 by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title

Author(s) Rand H. Johnson

Reference *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4/1 (1992): 160-63.

ISSN 1050-7930 (print), 2168-3719 (online)

Abstract Review of *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ* (1991), edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr.

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991. 292 pp., with subject and scripture indexes. \$11.95.

Reviewed by Rand H. Johnson

The fifteen essays appearing in this volume began as papers presented at the Fifth Annual Book of Mormon Symposium in 1989. Following Elder Neal A. Maxwell's opening remarks, the presenters include Kenneth W. Anderson, Susan Easton Black, Lee L. Donaldson, Dennis L. Largey, Gerald N. Lund, Robert J. Matthews, Byron R. Merrill, Robert L. Millet, Monte S. Nyman, Daniel C. Peterson, H. Donl Peterson, W. Ralph Pew, S. Michael Wilcox, and Clyde J. Williams.

In the leading essay, "The Children of Christ," Elder Maxwell writes with the wonder and excitement of someone who is looking forward to marvelous discoveries concerning the Book of Mormon.

There is so much more in the Book of Mormon than we have yet discovered. . . . All the rooms in this mansion [of the Book of Mormon] need to be explored, whether by valued traditional scholars or those at the cutting edge. Each plays his role, and one Latter-day Saint scholar cannot say to the other, "I have no need of thee" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

In the papers which follow, the reader will find largely the work of the traditionalists.

Several of the essays, though, impressed me with their new approach to the text of Mosiah. In "Abinadi: The Prophet and Martyr," Robert J. Matthews examines the account of Abinadi, his speech before Noah, and its consequences. Matthews presents evidence of the incompleteness of the extant speech and cautiously suggests, based on this evidence, directions Abinadi's remarks may have gone. This reflects a healthy skepticism about the form of scripture which has marked his work on Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible, and which can be traced in this dispensation from Joseph Smith's "as far as it is translated [or transmitted] correctly." Matthews also observes that the expression "first resurrection" is first used in the Book

of Mormon by Abinadi. I think, however, that in discussing the concept, he may be overly subtle in seeking a distinction between the expressions "are the first resurrection" and "have a part in the first resurrection." There is probably nothing exclusive in the use of "are," which can be used with nouns to refer to the nature of a thing.¹ For instance, to say that "God is spirit" does not mean that he is exclusively spirit (or that spirit is exclusively God).

In "Government by the Voice of the People: A Witness and a Warning," Byron R. Merrill discusses the implications of the "transition from kingship to government by the voice of the people." He compares the system of judges in ancient Israel with the system of judges instituted in Mosiah 29. Merrill discusses the relationships between freedom and law, and freedom and free agency. In order to demonstrate the decline in religious consciousness among statesmen since the time of the Founders, he cites, among other evidence, statistical studies based on writings of the Founders showing the large percentage of citations from the book of Deuteronomy. I would conjecture, however, that rather than documenting the Founders' reading of the Bible, the citations were taken from intermediate sources, such as the writings of other political philosophers and clergymen. Merrill enters the era of the modern judiciary with a section on why the American political system is in danger. Here he comes close to arguing for "original intent" (though he does not use the expression) in interpreting the Constitution, citing the criticisms of Judge Robert Bork against "revisionist judges" who impose on the law the values of their own social class.

In another essay which draws attention to differences in Nephite culture before and after the changes under Mosiah II and Alma the Younger, Daniel C. Peterson examines the nature and exercise of the priesthood in Mosiah. One of the more original investigations in the collection, this paper traces "the changes in the responsibility of delegating and regulating the priesthood from the familial priesthood organization during Lehi's time to the ecclesiastical priesthood organization during the time of Alma the Younger." Citing Nephite, Israelite, early Christian, and Islamic parallels, Peterson looks at the implications of the joint holding of religious and temporal authority by an individual king, the uses of baptism in a time when birth signalled entrance

¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1:718, B.III.9.c., where examples are given to show that the verb "to be" can be used with nouns connotatively.

into the religious community, and the survival of priesthood authority under a corrupt religious head. In elucidating these matters Peterson applies a knowledge of ancient history and of early nineteenth-century American English to an understanding of the Book of Mormon.

In his essay, "The Natural Man: An Enemy to God," Robert L. Millet discusses what King Benjamin has to say concerning the doctrine of the Fall, the qualities of the natural man, and the means of eradicating these qualities from our lives. The strength of this essay lies in Millet's ability to see modern society in terms of these categories in the book of Mosiah. Most sobering are his comments concerning the type of natural man who is moral, but a citizen of a fallen world.

Of all the discussions of King Benjamin's address in this collection, W. Ralph Pew's is distinguished by its attention to our obligation to care for the poor, the temporally as well as spiritually destitute. Pew argues that this care is more than a social obligation, it is vital to our own spiritual well-being and personal salvation. He cites Joseph Smith's remarks to the Nauvoo Relief Society on 9 June 1842: "The nearer we get to our heavenly Father the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls to take them upon our shoulders and cast their sins behind our back." This is not women's work only, and, as Pew reminds us, we cannot content ourselves with care for those only within our ward boundaries, or for members of the Church alone, while turning our backs on the suffering of others within our communities. The lessons of Pew's essay have always been relevant, and the current economic climate lends a particular urgency to his remarks.

Scholarship on the Book of Mormon can be categorized into two types. There is that which sheds light on the ancient setting of the book, which brings us closer to its persons and their sensibilities, through the application of historical knowledge acquired through a variety of tools—e.g., linguistic, archaeological, art-historical. This requires specialized training pursued by a small portion of students of the Book of Mormon. Another kind of scholarship, just as vital and within the grasp of many more members of the Church, is that which helps us to see the Book of Mormon in terms of life at the end of the twentieth century. This scholarship is informed by a perspicuity about contemporary society, and often by an awareness of the results of the other kind of scholarship. While there is much in the present collection of essays on Mosiah that is enlightening, there

is more that reflects the view from a cloister, lacking a footing in either the world of the Book of Mormon or our own. It is not enough to let scriptural texts and statements by General Authorities converse among themselves in our essays. The expectations and needs of believers and seekers deserve a scholarship aware of the nature of humankind in whatever period.