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Abstract Review of *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse* (1992), by David A. Reed and John R. Farkas.

David A. Reed and John R. Farkas. *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992. 141 pp., with scripture index and list of recommended readings. \$6.99.

Reviewed by Keith J. Wilson

Mormons Answered Verse by Verse is an attempt to “refute the misuse of the Bible” (p. 13) by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Written by two evangelical Christians, David Reed and John Farkas, the book reflects their zealous desires to expose the allegedly faulty use of selected biblical passages by Mormons. Mr. Farkas draws his insights from a nine-year membership in the Church, during which time he served as an elders quorum president. Mr. Reed is a former Jehovah’s Witness who views Mormonism in a similar light.

This volume contains three general divisions. First, it presents an introduction and three short chapters as a framework for understanding Mormonism. With nothing more than the first two introductory paragraphs, even the casual reader will readily sense the negativism which permeates this paperback. This negative slant continues throughout the introduction and chapter one, both of which examine the historical roots of Mormonism. In chapter two the authors examine the current doctrines (and not so current, i.e., Adam-God theory) of the Latter-day Saints. The third chapter completes the background materials with an overview of Mormon scripture. “Overview,” however, might be somewhat euphemistic, as the authors digress quickly into an assault on the Joseph Smith Translation and the authenticity of the Pearl of Great Price.

The second general portion of the book represents the heart of the content. Here, in chapters four through six, the focus turns to a verse-by-verse refutation of the biblical passages Mormons commonly use to support their theology. Chapter four is an attempt by the authors to refute Latter-day Saint interpretation of twenty-one Old Testament passages. Likewise, chapter five treats thirty-four passages from the New Testament with a similar per-

spective. Then, finally, chapter six discards the putative purpose of this volume and attacks Mormon doctrine on its own turf by analyzing fifteen Book of Mormon verses. The third and final section of this piece concludes with two short chapters. The first chapter outlines how to convert Mormons, and the second, chapter eight, tells about the authors personally and their brush with Mormonism.

The larger issue of this review is the question of scholarly impact. Do these two devotees effectively accomplish their task of scripturally refuting Mormonism? The most probable answer is a split decision, dependent more upon the religious predisposition of the reader than the rhetoric or persuasiveness of this book. For critics of Mormonism, the sheer number of scriptural citations, complete with logical barbs and daggers, promises hours of premeditated superiority and quixotic victories. However, for those loyal to Mormonism, these pages will engender a different response.

This book will present precious little substance for the pro-Mormon audience. It basically attacks biblical Mormonism through the worn-out arguments of polytheism, polygamy, and non-Christian theology. For the assault on the Book of Mormon, the authors flog the issues of biblical plagiarism and archaeological anachronisms. Many of their scriptural explanations, both biblical and Book of Mormon, loop rather quickly back into one or another of these issues. Aside from their specific content concerns, the authors will definitely offend their Latter-day Saint sympathizers with their unabashed use of both spurious and specious logic. For one example, consider their answer to the Mormon use of James 1:5 in the New Testament. This verse admonishes mankind to pray for guidance in areas of uncertainty. Reed and Farkas respond, "He (God) does not expect us to ask him questions that we can answer for ourselves . . . such as, 'Should I rob a bank?' or 'Is Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs a true story?' and we cannot expect him to give us personal answers to such questions" (p. 101). Their answer borders on the absurd, if not presumptuous, counsel that intelligent Christian students will read this book and, subsequently, have no need to ask God about the truth of Mormonism. In short, Reed and Farkas elevate their intellectual

conclusions above and beyond personal feedback from God. Such is the reasoning that devout Mormons will find insulting.

Although this book will mostly serve to segregate its readership, are there any positives that this publication might spawn? In all likelihood a smaller segment of non-LDS readers will find in this volume a springboard for deeper introspection concerning their religious convictions. Jesus himself admonished his followers to "search the scriptures" (John 5:39). Possibly a perusal of these cited passages will encourage all serious Christians to consider their theology more thoughtfully. A second beneficiary might also be the committed Latter-day Saint reader. Too often this group has not wrestled sufficiently with attacks like those advanced by Reed and Farkas on the issues of polygamy, polytheism, and supposedly non-Christian theological frameworks. Consequently, this book might engender some thoughtful study from Latter-day Saint readers even with its deeply bipolar orientation.

In a final challenge, the authors encourage their readership to engage Mormons with the help of a four-letter abbreviation, L.P.P.Q. Their explanation: love, politeness, patience, and quality (p. 125). Perhaps the message behind this acronym represents the real contribution of this paperback, by identifying something that both Mormon critics and sympathizers can finally agree upon.