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The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants John A. Widstoe

Roy W. Doxey

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Spectrum. However, the book does offer a nontechnical introduction to some interesting currents in Catholic thought, as our short survey of Daniel Callahan's opinions on God has perhaps shown.

John A. Widstoe. *The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants*, edited and arranged by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1969. 179 pp. \$3.50.

(Reviewed by Roy W. Doxey, professor of scripture at Brigham Young University. Professor Doxey has probably written more on the Doctrine and Covenants than any other man in this dispensation. He has published *Doctrine and Covenants and the Future* (1957), *The Doctrine and Covenants Speakers* (1964), *The Latter-Day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4 vols. (1963-65), and *Zion in the Last Days* (1969, as well as other Church books.)

In his foreword, the editor says that this book represents lectures given at the University of Southern California during the period April to June 1936 by Elder Widstoe, deceased member of the Council of the Twelve of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The editor admits that these lectures were "not completed or 'polished' in his [Elder Widstoe] own inimitable manner for publication." The original material consisted of two parts: "(1) An extensive outline, and (2) the transcript of his university lectures as actually delivered (with the aid of additional notes) from the extensive outline." The editor undertook to "edit and organize the transcript of these lectures into chapter divisions." Credit for the "arduous statistical and analytical labor recorded in these pages, the hard work," goes to Elder Widstoe, and to him "belongs full regard for whatever of value is here portrayed from his life-long endeavor to understand, and portray with simplicity, the message of the Doctrine and Covenants. In his absence, I assume and bear full responsibility for the book as it now appears. It is not a Church publication. It does not carry any official approval."

For any one who is looking for a "capsule" treatment of a great book of scripture, this book answers the need. Of value to the beginning student of this standard work is the author's division of *The Message of the Doctrine and Covenants* into

seven parts. This allows the reader to "fit everything into one or the other of these divisions" (pp. 18-19). The book is written in a simple, straightforward style, characteristically the style of a teacher in the classroom. The informal nature of the lecture is evident throughout, with such statements as: "Martin Harris was 'some pumpkin'" (p. 36). "Have you ever thought of that boy twenty-five years of age talking in such a way to a man nearly twice his age? Martin was a prosperous man in the community. The young upstart Joseph had nothing. Yet he was laying down the law to this man" (p. 39). "There is the deceiver who goes about and says, 'This man doesn't know any better. I have some worthless real estate here, and I will just fool him.' He is a deceiver. The hypocrite is slightly different. He is also a deceiver but he powders his face, curls his hair and trims his whiskers and tries to make himself appear what he is not" (p. 52).

In a classroom situation and without a written script, a teacher may make statements which he would not ordinarily use for publication, not, perhaps, because they do not represent his understanding, but because they represent only the thought at the moment. If the lecturer had "polished" the material for eventual publication, it might have been different. For example, on Page 86, reference is made to the doctrine of opposite existences with this comment: "President B. H. Roberts brought out this doctrine in his writings"—but with no reference to the source of a discussion of the doctrine as taught by President Roberts. Another example is about an eyewitness account of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon receiving the "Vision," Section 76, with this statement:

The story goes—I do not know how correct it is—that there were people present at time the revelation was given, and that as the revelation came to the two brethren, idea upon idea, vision upon vision, the two men spoke to each other and said, "Did you understand it this way?" Was this what you heard or saw?" I think it is a correct story. You will find it in some of the records of the Church. Men have testified that they heard such remarks made (p. 169).

The informal classroom style of "writing" is also indicated in this confession: "I have not had a great deal of interest, not as much as I should have, in the hereafter. I am so enamored with this life that I haven't had time to think of the hereafter.

I am perfectly content to let the hereafter take care of itself, if I live right here” (pp. 165-166).

The total view of the Doctrine and Covenants is well presented, but unfortunately, it is an acknowledged hurried view. “We have hurried over the commandments relative to daily living. It would be well to study these matters in our homes in greater detail” (p. 140). Elder Widstoe provides the reader with ample references for further study: “The Godhead is discussed. The separate members are clearly set forth [two references] as the Father [five references are given], the Son [four references] and the Holy Ghost [three references] (p. 121).” “Duties of parents are found in . . . [four references are given] (p. 81).”

Knowing Elder Widtsoe’s stature as a student of the scriptures and his calling in the Church, I feel today’s student of the Doctrine and Covenants would benefit greatly if Elder Widtsoe had had time to do as he suggests on Page 30:

Without digging under, it is quite a waste of time to be dealing with the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and any other such book. By “digging under,” I mean that we must take every word and sentence, every idea, and weight them, so to speak, against our best understanding.

Elder Widtsoe, as an inspired, scholarly, contributor to the literature of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is known throughout the Church. His many contributions to the periodicals of the Church, as well as his numerous books, have been received with enthusiasm. If he had had the opportunity to put this material on the Doctrine and Covenants in publishable form, it would then no doubt be equal to his other books.

Christopher Layton, Colonizer, Statesman, Leader. This edition edited by Myron W. McIntyre and Noel R. Barton. Christopher Layton Family Organization, 1966. 438 pp. \$5.00.

(Reviewed by Ivan J. Barrett, associate professor of religion at Brigham Young University. Professor Barrett is the author of *Joseph Smith and the Restoration* (1967), as well as numerous Church pamphlets.)

On Christopher Layton’s seventy-seventh birthday, which he commemorated in Safford, Arizona, he was visited by many