



1-1-1969

*Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* Hyrum L.  
**Andrus**

Ellis T. Rasmussen

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



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

---

**Recommended Citation**

Rasmussen, Ellis T. (1969) "*Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* Hyrum L. Andrus," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 9 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol9/iss1/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

Hyrum L. Andrus. *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1967. 522 pp. \$4.95.

(Reviewed by Ellis T. Rasmussen, associate professor of Old Testament languages and literature at Brigham Young University. Dr. Rasmussen is the author of *Patriarchs of the Old Testament* (1964) and *An Introduction to the Old Testament and Its Teachings, A Syllabus*, Pt. I, 1966; Pt. II, 1967.)

Hyrum L. Andrus himself says, "It requires experience for man to comprehend any given state of existence."<sup>1</sup> This is certainly true. To comprehend some of the facets and functions of many institutions of heaven and earth with which his commentary deals, one would need a background of a broad variety of experience, spiritually and intellectually. Dr. Andrus has done well with all resources and experience at his com-

---

<sup>1</sup>P. 267 of the book reviewed. All reference notes are to page numbers in *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* unless otherwise identified.

mand; but if a reader finds himself feeling less experienced in things paradisiacal and celestial, he may, like this reviewer, have to return and reread some of the more esoteric portions. Careful study will reward the conscientious reader, however, and no one should abandon any difficult chapter or section after only one or two attempts to understand all that is in it.

The book needs a broader title if it is to be descriptive of the content; this book is something more than a "doctrinal commentary on the Pearl of Great Price." Of course it could hardly be entitled "Elucidations upon a Series of Related Theological Themes Selected as Major Religio-Philosophical Contributions of the Pearl of Great Price, with Complementary Concepts from Related Prophetic Sources"! But that would somewhat roundly describe it.

Among Dr. Andrus' major contributions in this work are his perceptive analyses and his logical syntheses. He has drawn together concepts and made many meaningful summations which have not been so drawn before. The reader must, therefore, often set aside his own preconceptions or biases in order to evaluate honestly new concepts under slightly adapted old terminology, old concepts under new and specific terms, and new concepts under new nomenclature.

Among the contributions of the commentary is a quite generous provision of quoted materials from primary documents and materials not readily available elsewhere. Naturally this feature means that the composition of the book entailed collection and collation of materials from many sources in addition to, and outside of, the Pearl of Great Price proper.

For example, as present interest heightens with regard to the nature of Joseph Smith's translation of the Egyptian papyri (some of which have recently been rediscovered and made available), Dr. Andrus' assertion that the prophet "literally translated an alphabet to the Book of Abraham" will bear further investigation.<sup>2</sup> The hypothesis that "Abraham understood the Adamic language, and that he may have used it in making his record" will deserve consideration.<sup>3</sup> That the inscriptions on the papyri are not exactly like all other Egyptian inscriptions and are not translated like the common run of hieroglyphic idiograms and "alphabets" no one who studies

---

<sup>2</sup>P. 25.

<sup>3</sup>P. 27.

them and their translations will doubt. It is to be hoped that future projects shall prosper to the degree that "truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven."<sup>4</sup>

In the second chapter information from the Book of Moses is effectively aligned and supplemented by the biblical books of Moses and by Joseph Smith's inspired revision of it. Some important theological items from divine revelations to Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Joseph Smith are conveniently and appreciatively presented. In this and the succeeding chapter concerning the nature of the Godhead, Dr. Andrus makes his best contributions in definitions of terms and delineations of functions pertaining to Deity. The importance of understanding such things he emphasizes in a paraphrase of a saying of Jesus: "This is what it means to possess eternal life—to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."<sup>5</sup>

A brief, one-page section on "Christ and the Holy Ghost" presents some concise summations on the relationship of the Holy Ghost as the minister of Christ and as an aspect of "the Spirit of Christ" more clearly than most commentaries on the infinitely difficult concept of the *oneness* of the Godhead.<sup>6</sup>

On the confusing matter of the sequence of the creative processes of God depicted differently in Genesis 1, Genesis 2, the Book of Abraham, the Book of Moses, and in other revelation-materials, the procedure as outlined in the account by Abraham is selected as most defensible. From man's primeval state as "intelligence" (not *an intelligence* as the popular misconception states it according to Dr. Andrus<sup>7</sup>) on through his existence as a spirit, later embodied, disembodied, and finally redeemed, man's career is traced. Less familiar to most readers will be the earth's program of development seen by Dr. Andrus as first created as a "physical-spiritual" entity in a "paradisiacal-celestial" state, then sanctified or "brought fully

<sup>4</sup>P. 2. Psalm 85, a supplication of the "Sons of Korah" for the future prosperity of Israel's land, is cited by Dr. Andrus as it has been cited by other writers as a prophecy for our times.

<sup>5</sup>P. 52; cf. John 17:3. Another example of a clarification of a divine concept left none too clear by the scriptures may be seen on p. 229, concerning the relationship of "the will of the Son" to "the will of the Father."

<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., p. 89.

<sup>7</sup>P. 116, paragraph 2. Note that the first paragraph on the page has been revised in the second printing of the 1967 edition. The revisions concern the nature of the eternal "inherent life" within the spirit.

into the presence of God" until the time when it "fell" into its present temporal state.

This sampling of notable contributions must conclude with a mere list of half a dozen others suggestive of the scope of the book. These include dissertations on the role and programs of Satan, the nature of "spiritual death," the need for and nature of "infinite atonement," the "great celestial system of eternity" called Zion with its "divine patriarchal order," subversive causes of past and present social degeneration, ramifications of the restoration of promises made to the fathers in the hearts of the children, and the infinite scope of God's projects in the universe.

There are, inevitably, some needs, lacks, and oversights. An example of the latter would be a footnote on a quotation from Joseph Smith's inspired version of Exodus 34:28-35 intended to make the point that "Moses received a lesser law" on the second set of stone tablets. Support for the idea is sought in Chapter Three of II Corinthians, which is only incidentally pertinent, while the clearest statement of the point is not cited though it is found in the first two verses of the very chapter of Exodus quoted!<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes the lucidity of the usually apt synthesis leaves something to be desired by the uninitiated, as might be seen in a summation of the concept of the *oneness* of Father and Son: "Christ's union with the Father is ideal in individualism."<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the rationale behind a bit of exegesis is not clear; take for example the identification of the speaker in the revelation to Moses (recorded in Moses 1) as the Christ.<sup>10</sup>

"New meanings for old phrases" may be illustrated by the interpretation of the phrase "called by prophecy" to relate it to the concept of "foreordination."<sup>11</sup> Since a "prophet" for God is one who speaks for God, it may well be that to be "called by prophecy"—as we believe one must be in order to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof—means that one is called by one who has the authority to speak for God. This should be evaluated in cases such as the

<sup>8</sup>Viz. the Inspired Version of Exodus 34:1-2.

<sup>9</sup>P. 75.

<sup>10</sup>Pp. 70-71. Note it is not the conclusion, but the rationale behind it here that is called into question.

<sup>11</sup>See pp. 123-4.

calling of a Primary teacher, a Sunday School teacher, an elders' president, a missionary, etc.

The reader may be surprised to find that God's "Sabbath" after six periods of creative work may be seen not as a day of rest (though the Hebrew word *sabbath* means *rest* or *cessation*) but as a day of planting and placing of plants, animals and man upon the earth.<sup>12</sup>

The book cannot cover everything, and so the reader must not expect to find correlation of geological observations with scripture, nor to learn who "begot" Adam's body,<sup>13</sup> nor to get all of the ramifications of race and priesthood restrictions and civil and political rights.<sup>14</sup>

In the area of technicalities, it should be observed that the assertion is made in a footnote<sup>15</sup> that a change has been made in the reading of Revelations 1:6 in the Inspired Version of the Bible as issued by the Reorganized Church; but whether an *alteration* was made or whether the copy from which the printed edition was made *lacked* a note which the Bernhisel Manuscript has is controversial. Another quotation from the Inspired Version fails to make a proper point when the passage from John 1:1-4, 14 first identifies the *gospel* as "the word" and then goes on to say "the same word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . . ."

A careful, intelligent study of Dr. Andrus' commentary will reward the most critical reader. Its most valuable contributions are found in the area of an understanding of the nature of the relationships of the Godhead to man and the universe. "To this end," says Dr. Andrus, "the Pearl of Great Price makes many vital and important contributions."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>P. 171. The basis of the idea is found in D&C 77:12.

<sup>13</sup>Pp. 179-180. There is, of course, only *one* "Only Begotten Son" of the Father.

<sup>14</sup>Pp. 402-406. Pertinent information to be found in Alma 13:3-8 is not here cited, though it was cited on another point earlier on p. 133. It would be useful here also.

<sup>15</sup>P. 499.

<sup>16</sup>P. 510.