



Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

Volume 10 | Number 2

Article 4

1998

A Book of Mormon Christology at Last

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Gee, John (1998) "A Book of Mormon Christology at Last," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 10 : No. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol10/iss2/4>

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Title A Book of Mormon Christology at Last

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Reference *FARMS Review of Books* 10/2 (1998): 7-8.

ISSN 1099-9450 (print), 2168-3123 (online)

Abstract Review of *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (1997), by Jeffrey R. Holland.

Jeffrey R. Holland. *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997. xiv + 433 pp., with four appendixes, scripture and subject indexes. \$23.95.

Reviewed by John Gee

A Book of Mormon Christology at Last

The appearance of this book should cause rejoicing, for this is a commentary on the Book of Mormon that merits reading. The author has important and insightful things to say. The writing is clear and accessible. The typeface is pleasant and readable. And at long last Deseret Book has actually produced a well-bound volume.

It should not surprise anyone that it would take an apostle, a special witness of Jesus Christ, to produce by far the best work to date on the christology of the Book of Mormon. Elder Holland is no stranger to Book of Mormon studies, having produced a master's thesis on the Book of Mormon.¹ In an offhand remark a couple of years ago at a symposium, Elder Holland, commenting on the busy schedule of an apostle, lamented that it is difficult to produce a scholarly work from the reading material available on Delta airlines. He has nevertheless done exceedingly well, for although references to scholarly studies are at a minimum in this work, the focus is, as it should be in a work of this kind, on the Book of Mormon. Even if Elder Holland has not had the time to reference previous purported studies of Book of Mormon christology, he has the distinct advantage of actually having read the Book of Mormon closely, and thus no future scholarly study of

¹ Jeffrey R. Holland, "An Analysis of Selected Changes in Major Editions of the Book of Mormon—1830–1920" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966).

Book of Mormon christology can afford to neglect Elder Holland's study.

The plan of this book is very simple. Beginning with the assertion that the Book of Mormon is a new covenant or testament of Jesus Christ and that Christ is the central figure in the book, Elder Holland then goes through the Book of Mormon chronologically, prophet by prophet, and identifies what new understanding each prophet's revelations added to the knowledge of Christ in that remarkable record. Elder Holland pays careful attention to the teachings in the Book of Mormon about the atonement of Christ and the appearance and teachings of the resurrected Jesus to the Nephites. Finally he concludes with his own apostolic witness of Jesus Christ. At the end, appearing before the notes and indexes, are four appendixes on the titles for Christ, Book of Mormon quotations of Isaiah, the First Presidency's "Doctrinal Exposition of the Father and the Son," and comparison of the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount.

Elder Holland's many insights into the Book of Mormon (including the chiasmic framework of Jesus' first day among the Nephites) are too numerous even to summarize here. The reader would be better served by reading Elder Holland's writings rather than this book review. It is, however, worth emphasizing one of Elder Holland's statements: the devotion of Latter-day Saints to the Book of Mormon and the traditional account of its production have come to be among our most cherished convictions "because the Book of Mormon affirms our yet higher and more sublime belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and Savior and Redeemer of the world" (p. 346).