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**Title** Modern-Day Lessons from the Book of Mormon

**Author(s)** T. Lynn Elliot

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**Abstract** Review of *As One Crying from the Dust: Book of Mormon Messages for Today* (1999), by Brent L. Top.

## MODERN-DAY LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON

T. Lynn Elliott

This book, Brent Top's meditation on the Book of Mormon, is perhaps what one would expect from someone who has spent his professional life dealing with questions on religion from university students. In it, Top looks at what the Book of Mormon tells us about several topics—such as faith, repentance, and perfection—and shows in each topic the central role of the Savior in the gospel plan and the power of the Book of Mormon to change lives.

As such, the book reads almost like the transcription of a well-organized Gospel Doctrine class, all the way down to the short anecdotes that introduce each topic. The doctrinal insights are often commonsensical, though no less profound for this. For instance, in discussing repentance, Top argues that we ought to get away from the idea of following some “checklist” in repenting. If one followed a literal checklist for every sin committed (whether the checklist is four, five, or seven steps), one would spend most of one's time either committing sin or repenting for sins committed (pp. 69–70). More important, he argues, one who views repentance in terms of a simple checklist stands in danger of ignoring the redeeming power of the Savior's sacrifice. It is a practical point but one that can be overlooked.

Review of Brent L. Top. *As One Crying from the Dust: Book of Mormon Messages for Today*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999. xiv + 252 pp., with index. \$21.95.

Another example of this practical religion is Top's treatment of perfection. As he points out, perfection—in the religious sense—is not perfectionism. It is a process of becoming like God and it requires an acceptance of the Savior's atonement and a willingness to work "line upon line" (p. 157). In short, being "perfect" does not require that we run faster than we have energy. It means that we live our lives, as much as is in our power, in accordance with God's commandments. This approach to perfection focuses the quest more on the redeeming power of the Savior and less on our "becoming perfect" on our own.

Likewise, his discussion of the use of *remember* and *remembrance* in the Book of Mormon shows a certain profundity in a very simple idea. His basic point is that the use of *remember* often implies more than the simple recall of an event; rather, *remember* implies making the scriptures (or commandments or covenants or whatever is being remembered) an integral part of one's life. The point is obvious in retrospect, but may not be so obvious on the first, third, or even twentieth reading of the Book of Mormon.

Top has thought long and hard about the doctrines of the Book of Mormon and has integrated these musings with the writings of modern-day prophets. The book *As One Crying from the Dust*, although written by a scholar, is not really a scholarly work but a compelling testimony to the power of the doctrines taught in the Book of Mormon.