New Volume Elucidates Book of Revelation
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Understanding the Book of Revelation, a new book by Jay A. Parry and FARMS board member Donald W. Parry, published by Deseret Book, elucidates John the Beloved’s stirring vision found in the book of Revelation. The authors draw upon the scriptures, the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and other LDS Church leaders, and insights from Bible scholars to offer a phrase-by-phrase (sometimes word-by-word) commentary on all 22 chapters of Revelation. The book includes background information for understanding John’s rich imagery and symbolism. For example, the notes and commentary for each chapter are preceded by a helpful overview, and six appendixes offer additional information such as a convenient list of the key symbols John used and their interpretations.

The authors believe that the most important aspect of the book of Revelation is that it reveals Jesus Christ to us. The first chapter presents a view of the glorious resurrected Lord, and every subsequent chapter throughout the book sets forth doctrines pertaining to his atoning sacrifice, his love and mercy, his divine judgments upon the wicked, and his rewards for the righteous. The authors emphasize that, as a Christ-centered text, the book of Revelation teaches us many important truths about Christ’s divine mission, mortal ministry, atoning sacrifice, resurrection, kingship, and glory.

According to BYU professor of church history and doctrine Susan Easton Black, Understanding the Book of Revelation is an insightful commentary that clarifies “the veiled, symbolic language of John. . . . This is must reading!” Richard D. Draper, a BYU professor of ancient scripture with expertise in the book of Revelation, considers the Parrys’ new book to be “well written, clearly presented, conveniently organized, and doctrinally sound. A fine resource on a difficult but compelling subject.” FARMS members can obtain the book at the regular 20 percent discount through FARMS (see the order form) or at participating bookstores.

Insights revisited

Gnosticism and the Loss of Prophecy in the Early Christian Church

In his book The World and the Prophets, Hugh W. Nibley considers the historical role of Gnostics and their influence on the early Christian church. He explains that in the great Gnostic revolution of the second century, the whole orientation of the church changed completely. What brought this about? It was the ceasing of prophetic voices. The continuing demand in the church for the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, gave rise to an army of quacks and fakirs who, though discredited in time, left their mark permanently and conspicuously on the Christian church. These were the Gnostics, so called.

Paul had prophesied in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that prophecies shall be stopped, tongues shall be made to cease, gnosis shall be done away with. These gifts were not simply to fade away; they were going to be taken away. Paul’s use of the word gnosis leaves us in no doubt as to what it conveyed to the early Christians. Nibley points out that for them it was exactly what we would translate as “a testimony of the gospel.” The gnosis is the knowledge acquired only by revelation and

not in ordinary ways. Paul reminds the Colossians that the gnosis is “hidden away” (2:3) and that not everyone has it who claims to.

The first men to write against the Gnostics are always very careful to designate them as the so-called or self-styled Gnostics and their teachings as the false gnosis. This shows that there was or had been a real gnosis that those people were imitating.

As long as there were living apostles, Nibley believes, the impostors had been kept in their

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