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### Book Notes

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## BOOK NOTES

**Larry Anderson. *2 Hour Book of Mormon: A Book of Mormon Primer*. Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2000. 197 pp. \$12.95.**

This condensed version of the Book of Mormon has greatly simplified the Book of Mormon text to help early readers become acquainted with Book of Mormon stories before they advance to the actual book. The author has chosen not to include some violence and some difficult passages, such as those from Isaiah. He has tried to avoid changing or diminishing Book of Mormon teachings. An example of the simple vocabulary and sentences follows: “This book is not the Book of Mormon. This book tells many stories and ideas that are in the Book of Mormon.”

**K. Douglas Bassett, comp. *Commentaries on Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*. American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2003. iii + 298 pp. \$29.95.**

Teachers and students of the Book of Mormon will find *Commentaries on Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, to be a useful collection of insights, facts, stories, and exegeses offered by scholars and General Authorities of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints concerning passages of Isaiah quoted in the Book of Mormon. Bassett draws quotations from a wide variety of publications in making this compilation, paying particular attention to commentaries

on difficult phrases in the text in order to provide the reader with doctrinal, historical, and cultural insights to enhance his or her study. He mixes in a “good dose” of commentary, offering modern-day application and illustration of Isaiah’s teachings as well. While some may find the work to be somewhat terse or remedial for in-depth study, even advanced scholars will appreciate the effort of collecting all this material into a single, easy-to-use volume. [Terry B. Ball]

***Book of Mormon Family Heritage Edition.* Salt Lake City: Covenant Communications, 2003. 552 pp. \$79.95.**

Reminiscent of family Bibles in earlier generations, this attractive book is meant to fulfill a similar function—as a treasured possession and a place to record information to be preserved through the generations. The first pages of this large volume feature places to record births, blessings, baptisms and confirmations, marriages, and other important family events. Constructed with a bonded-leather cover, sewn binding, a ribbon marker, and acid-neutral pages with gilded edges, the book contains over seventy illustrations from numerous Latter-day Saint artists. This large-print edition, featuring illuminated initial letters, contains the full text of the Book of Mormon; it does not, however, include any notes, indexes, or other study helps.

**S. Kent Brown. *Voices from the Dust: Book of Mormon Insights.* American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2004. xvi + 219 pp. \$18.95.**

*Voices from the Dust* provides a finely nuanced, cautious corrective to the careless devotional treatments of the stories found in the Book of Mormon; it also indirectly contains a thoroughly nonpolemical response to the literature produced by secular and sectarian critics who tend not to take the text or the most recent scholarship seriously. *Voices* thus makes a fine addition to the literature on the Book of Mormon. Kent Brown has provided a judicious and clearly written examination of various historical elements in the text. Taking up familiar stories, Brown, in his usual thoughtful, careful, insightful way, has assembled the latest research on a host of important issues. The fruit

of this research is presented in a way that is accessible even to beginning students of the Book of Mormon.

**Richard Lyman Bushman. *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*. Edited by Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth. New York City: Columbia University Press, 2004. xviii + 291 pp., with index. \$40.00.**

A convenient collection of shorter materials written over roughly thirty-five years by one of America's leading historians, this volume includes such important essays as "Faithful History," "The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution," "The Social Dimensions of Rationality," "The Lamanite View of Book of Mormon History," "Joseph Smith and Skepticism," "The Book of Mormon and Its Critics," and "The Visionary World of Joseph Smith." Readers interested in the reflections of a prominent, prize-winning scholar (Gouverneur Morris Professor of History emeritus at Columbia University in New York City) who is also a committed Latter-day Saint will find much to ponder in these pages. Professor Bushman is in the final stages of writing what promises to be a landmark biography of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

**Jack Christianson and K. Douglas Bassett. *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003. vii + 280 pp., with works cited and index. \$21.95.**

Coauthors Christianson and Bassett have each written several chapters of doctrinal insights, inspirational stories, and humble testimony that enable us to apply Book of Mormon principles and teachings in our modern day. Representative topics include our need for the Book of Mormon, the plan of happiness, Satan's chains, pride, turning weaknesses to strength, adversity, supporting church leaders, and coming closer to God through the Book of Mormon. The first chapter draws the reader in by telling the story of a young man with a terribly deformed body who was thrilled to receive a set of Book of Mormon tapes. He said he would play them all day long no matter who was there so he could be a missionary. He was indeed instrumental in the conversion of his parents, who

joined the church after his death. The purpose of this book is to encourage us to turn to the Book of Mormon for answers to life's problems.

**Arza Evans.** *The Keystone of Mormonism.* St. George, UT: Keystone Books, 2003. 331 pp., with index. \$18.95.

Arza Evans describes himself as “a retired college professor who grew up thoroughly indoctrinated with Mormonism.” He has subsequently turned against both his family and his faith. *The Keystone* appears to be self-published through his own Keystone Books, Inc., and then marketed through a “book distributor.” *The Keystone* seems to be his way of settling accounts with his estranged family. The arguments presented in the book are not original; Evans makes few additions to the common store of arguments found in the literature produced by other secular and sectarian anti-Mormon writers.

**Camille Fronk, Brian M. Hauglid, Patty A. Smith, Thomas A. Wayment, eds.** *The Fulness of the Gospel: Foundational Teachings from the Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and BYU Religious Studies Center, 2003. ix + 293 pp., with index. \$25.95.

This volume, the proceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, contains nineteen essays. Like most anthologies, these essays are a bit uneven. However, of the more thoughtful items in this anthology, several deserve a careful reading. Among the essays that are timely is Robert L. Millet's astute reflections on the work of grace as taught in the Book of Mormon and received by Latter-day Saint prophets. Likewise, by examining the way in which Isaiah was understood by prophets in the Lehi colony, John Gee and Matthew Roper have been able to cast light on the issue of whether the promised land given to Lehi was already inhabited by others. The essay by John A. Tvedtnes on captivity and liberty in the Book of Mormon and the one by Victor L. Ludlow on covenants are solid contributions.

**Robert C. Fuller.** *Religious Revolutionaries: The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. xi + 226 pp., with index. \$27.95.

Professor Fuller, who teaches religious studies at Bradley University, has included Joseph Smith (1805–1844) among those “revolutionaries” who have “reshaped” the American religious horizon. He also treats other so-called “revolutionaries,” including Paul Tillich (1886–1965), William James (1842–1910), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882), and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826). As slight as Fuller’s treatment of individual authors is, it is nice to have Joseph Smith included among those who get respectful attention. As his brief remarks about Joseph Smith (pp. 75–85) illustrate, the treatments afforded by Fuller of a host of “revolutionaries” tend to be brief, sketchy, and not overly critical. He borrows his brief narrative on Joseph Smith from a few of the better secondary sources, for example, R. Lawrence Moore, Jan Shippo, Thomas F. O’Dea, Leonard J. Arrington, and Davis Bitton. Little is original in *Religious Revolutionaries*, especially in Fuller’s treatment of Joseph Smith or the others he labels “religious revolutionaries.”

**Brian D. Garner.** *Search These Things Diligently: A Personal Study Guide to the Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003. x + 341 pp., with bibliography. \$17.95.

Garner, a teacher and student of the gospel for over twenty years, focuses on commonly asked questions in this mini-commentary, which is arranged to correspond to chapter and verse of the Book of Mormon. He particularly “worked to emphasize the teachings of the Book of Mormon that focus on Jesus Christ and the foundational doctrines of His gospel” (p. ix). For example, questions from Mosiah 27 include Why do we experience persecutions? How important is freedom of religion? How effective are the prayers of others on our behalf? What benefits come to those who fast and pray? Does serious sin take away all opportunity for the Lord’s mercy? (pp. 163–65). Responses to the questions are usually concise quotations from others with occasional insights from the author; cross-references direct the reader

to pertinent discussions in other parts of the book. Occasional charts and maps enhance this user-friendly study guide.

**Kristin Hahn.** *In Search of Grace: A Journey across America's Landscape of Faith.* New York: Quill (an imprint of HarperCollins), 2003. xvi + 302 pp. \$12.95.

In her midthirties, Hahn had had a ten-year career as a Hollywood writer, working in television and theater. Her career was exacting, but she was rootless. She sought some deeper meaning in her then unmarried life. Without traditional religious roots, she had her “aura, chart, palm, and coffee grounds read,” she was “acupunctured, acupressed, and hypnotically regressed,” as well as “regrouped by way of the occasional ‘spiritual’ workshop, and was always reassured by New Age bestsellers that [her] life was happening this way for a *reason*” (p. xiv). Eventually she resigned her writing job and set out on a three-year quest for spirituality that she believed could be found in rituals. Hahn is an engaging writer. She describes a vast host of stops on her “spiritual” journey—“communing with a Medicine Man,” “fasting with Muslims,” “stretching with Yogis,” and a host of other firsthand experiences in meditating, praying, and so forth. Her sole encounter with Latter-day Saints consisted of contacting “the Latter-day Saints’ headquarters in Salt Lake City, which in turn put [her] in touch with six young female missionaries sharing an apartment in the Boston area, near where [she] was living at the time” (p. 69). Without giving attention to what Latter-day Saints believe, she participated for a short time “testifying with Mormon missionaries” (pp. 70–81). In this and eighteen other chapters, Hahn tells of meditating, casting spells, chanting, and so forth. Her interest, she explains, was not in belief in doctrines, which she pictures as “the passive compliance of religious belief” (p. xvi), but in what she calls the “spiritual”—that is, in “the doing” (practice) that somehow helps people “lessen affliction” or otherwise feel that their lives are meaningful. Her

descriptions are vivid but intellectually barren, as is her own current resolute Yuppie spirituality (pp. 291–96).

**Alan Keele.** *In Search of the Supernal: Pre-Existence, Eternal Marriage, and Apotheosis in German Literary, Operatic, and Cinematic Texts.* Münster: Agenda Verlag, 2003. 347 pp., with index. \$30.00.

In this unusual volume, the author, a professor of German at Brigham Young University, offers “a dual homage, on the one hand to Theodore Ziolkowski and to my other teachers at Princeton, and on the other hand to my faculty colleagues and students at Brigham Young, with whom I have been blessed to associate for nearly forty years” (p. 8). Ranging through such works as Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) and Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s medieval poem and Richard Wagner’s controversial opera dealing with the Parzival legend, and the films of Wim Wenders, Keele reflects on themes of human deification, the need for a divine Savior, “our blissfully arduous path to Godhood best negotiated by a monad of man and woman blessed with eternal increase” (p. 7), “the temple as microcosmic heaven and blueprint for attaining the celestial life” (p. 8), and the emptiness of an existence void of transcendent meaning.

**Dennis H. Leavitt, Richard O. Christensen, et al.** *Scripture Study for Latter-day Saint Families: The Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003. ix + 374 pp., with bibliography and index. \$19.95.

This resource provides options for family scripture study beyond the mere reading of verses and chapters. Activities, object lessons, stories, quotations, and insights—identified by icons—help families to become students of the scriptures. For nearly every verse of the Book of Mormon, this book offers creative teaching ideas. *Scripture Study* is designed to be simple to use, even for children, and follows the Book of Mormon sequentially. Families can select those activities that will best enhance and enrich their study of the Book of Mormon.



**Richard E. Turley Jr., ed. and prod. *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002. 2 vols., 74 DVDs. \$1,299.**

*Selected Collections* contains high-quality images of more than four hundred thousand manuscript pages from the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The two-volume, forty-seven-DVD set includes documents such as journals, histories, and minutes from the Church Historian's Office; architectural drawings of the Salt Lake and Nauvoo Temples; minutes of various conferences and Relief Society, council, and quorum meetings; and letter books, papers, and journals of prophets and other prominent church members up to the early twentieth century. Now anyone with access to a DVD drive and Web browser can view these documents in full color, at high resolution, rather than pore over microfilm. This is a tremendous contribution to personal and scholarly research in the field of Latter-day Saint history.

**Drew Williams. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Mormonism*. New York: Alpha Books, 2003. xxi +313 pp., with appendices and index. \$18.95.**

Williams presents a basic, sometimes very simplified, overview of the beliefs and history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He does so without giving it a "missionary" feel, which makes the book more approachable by merely curious readers. However, in the spirit of "Idiot's Guide," Williams's tone is lighthearted and humorous, which can become slightly offensive when he deals with serious doctrine. On the whole, though, the book invites readers to transform any feelings of apprehension that they may have toward the Church of Jesus Christ into feelings of trust and understanding.