



## Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

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Volume 20 | Number 1

Article 17

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2008

### Book Notes

FARMS Review

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#### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Review, FARMS (2008) "Book Notes," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 20 : No. 1 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol20/iss1/17>

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## BOOK NOTES

**Steven A. Cramer. *Chosen: The Path to Divine Acceptance*. Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2007. 207 pp., with index, appendixes, and bibliography. \$14.99.**

Steven Cramer (the pseudonym for Gerald Curtis) has written many books on repentance and overcoming temptation. This book uses the medium of a novel to show the practical application of the counsel contained in his other books.

Elder Curtis has been in the mission field for six months and has been working hard. But he has a big problem—he is feeling guilty for lying to his leaders about his worthiness. He had a pornography habit that he stopped six months before his mission interviews so that he could say he was worthy. Now he realizes that he made a mistake.

The elder has a series of interviews with his mission president, President Love, over a couple of days. He is given materials to read in between these interviews, which he then discusses with President Love. He learns what true repentance is and what it entails, and he and the president discuss such topics as godly sorrow, the atonement, forsaking sins, making restitution, confession, and even the pitfalls of perfectionism. He learns that we decide whether we are “chosen,” as the word is used in Doctrine and Covenants 121 (which is also how the word is used in the title of the book).

The discussion between the elder and his mission president makes it easier to understand the principles being taught. One limitation

of the fictional scenario, however, is that it is quite difficult to show meaningful changes in the elder's life in just two days. This is obviously not how quickly true repentance happens in reality. But, as the author points out in the introduction, this story condenses time in order to expand doctrinal content. The author also steps out of the story in the appendixes, reminding readers that those addicted to pornography are usually not able to stop on their own and that recovery resources are readily available.

This book thoroughly covers the doctrine of repentance, even treating aspects that are generally not discussed elsewhere. The dialogue between the characters helps explain some of the more difficult concepts. Repentance is not an easy road, and this book can serve as a helpful guide.

*Trevor Holyoak*

**D. G. Hart. *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Age of Billy Graham*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005. 224 pp., with index. \$18.99.**

Orthodox Presbyterian seminarian and distinguished historian D. G. Hart has no use for the label *evangelical*. Why? The word has come to identify such a broad range of conservative Christian ideologies that it has lost its power to identify much of anything. There is no evangelical creed or confession, nor is there any ecclesiastical structure. Because the label identifies a vast diversity of opinions about a number of issues, Hart makes an argument for its irrelevance.

Hart describes how a very old label was given new life and meaning soon after World War II by Billy Graham (and his wealthy associates who founded *Christianity Today*). Those folks began at first to talk about a “new evangelical” movement. They did this in an effort to overcome and combat what was considered the deadening influence of the older fundamentalism. But the word *evangelical* in America, Hart contends, does not identify a polity or church or ecclesiastical structure. Instead, it identifies a vague faith tradition or umbrella under which a host of parachurch agencies, nondenominational megachurches, Pentecostals and charismatics, and differing opinions

on crucial issues compete with each other. In Hart's view it is pointless to lump these and similar movements and agencies under one name, since to do so obscures more than it reveals about contemporary Protestantism in America. For this and many other reasons, Hart calls for the label *evangelical* to be abandoned. "Despite the vast amounts of energy and resources expended on the topic, and notwithstanding the ever growing volume of literature on the movement, evangelicalism is little more than a construction" (pp. 16–17).

In the first part of his book, Hart traces the history of evangelicalism in the twentieth century (pp. 33–106). He is deeply troubled by pollsters who use the label *evangelical* and give it a vague, minimal meaning to identify conservative, nonliberal Protestant American religiosity. They end up including under that label such a wide variety of religious opinions and commitment that one cannot trust their results. Part 2 of *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*—entitled "The Unmaking of Evangelicalism" (pp. 107–74)—is an attempt to argue that what the label identifies is really a flush of competing ideologies that are without a fixed content or creed. Hart strives to understand how one might fruitfully categorize a movement that, having no confessions or denominations to hold it together, looks to celebrity parachurch figures like Billy Graham, James Dobson, and Tim LaHaye for leadership.

Hart asserts that evangelicalism cannot exist as a visible part of Christ's church in historically upholding what he considers the three marks of the church—that is, right preaching of the word of God, correct administration of the sacraments, and discipline in order to uphold the first two. Hart insists that evangelical parachurch organizations have different goals than those he considers essential to Christ's church (pp. 123–24). Parachurch organizations are, for Hart, more business undertakings than they are bonafide churches. If consumers do not buy the product (radio or TV sermon) or whatever the parachurch is selling, they can simply look for a different provider. Hart insists that "churches, unlike parachurch entities, have creeds that let people contemplating membership know the content of the denomination's faith. Churches also have structures of governance that provide a mechanism of accountability that is very different from that of

the market model, which determines which parachurch celebrities are the most popular and therefore authoritative” (p. 124). Hart argues that “to be an evangelical is to be in a perpetual frenzy of trying to get more—more money, more contributors, more access, more zeal, and of course more believers” (p. 124). And, of course, “parachurch organizations have the goal of adding to mailing lists to increase the chances of raising more revenue through direct mail appeals” (p. 124). These comments are a very modest selection of Hart’s criticisms of contemporary American conservative Protestantism from the perspective of a distinguished intellectual historian with an acerbic style.

Hart strives to talk professional historians out of their current enthrallment with whatever currently mingles and wars under the label *evangelical*. His conclusion is that much of what takes place under the label *evangelicalism* is an effort to attract consumers, not genuine disciples of Christ. It “lacks an institutional center, intellectual coherence, and devotional direction” (p. 176). He holds that post-World War II evangelicalism is the product of an individualistic “culture of celebrity, which is perhaps the flip side of denying the authority of traditions” (p. 120). The result has been to “combine two cups of inerrancy, one cup of conversion, and a pinch of doctrinal affirmations; form into a patchwork of parachurch agencies, religious celebrities, and churches; season with peppy music professionally performed; and bake every generation” (p. 183).

**Irving Hexham. *The Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001. 245 pp. \$16.99.**

According to Irving Hexham, a distinguished professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary, one can find “travel guides with titles like *Pagan Europe*, *Occult France*, *Magical Britain*, and *The Traveler’s Guide to Germany*” (p. 7), but not all that much on the Christian contribution to Europe, even or especially in standard travel books, which “tend to underplay Christian contributions to Western civilization through neglect or a negative tone” (p. 7). In an effort to correct this situation, Hexham has generated a series of guidebooks

that includes, in addition to the one he wrote on Great Britain, books on Germany, France, and Italy.

The reasons Hexham gives for his efforts should resonate with Latter-day Saints because they, too, have come to recognize that

the Bible is steeped in history and the remembrance of history. Both the Old and New Testaments constantly reminded their readers about particular historical events (Deuteronomy 4:9–25) both by retelling the story and through commemorations which enact the central acts of salvation (Exodus 13:3–16; 1 Corinthians 11:25–26). Further, an appeal is frequently made to visible memorials that remind people of God’s wonderful deeds (Acts 2:29–36). We also find both Jews and early Christians visiting historical sites as acts of devotion (Luke 2:21–41; Acts 21:17–27). (p. 8)

Hexham insists that Christians are “not a tribal religion rooted in local communities bound by kinship bonds” (p. 9) but should instead be a community grounded on faith. “The great truth of the New Testament is that Christians are children of God by adoption” (p. 9). And this explains why the scriptures “point to examples of faith which we are encouraged to follow and remember (Joshua 4; Luke 11:29–32; Acts 7; Hebrews 12). Remembering acts of courage and obedience to God strengthens our own faith. This fact was long recognized by the leaders of the church. Throughout history, Christians have told and retold stories of courage and faith” (p. 9).

But now much of this has been neglected or forgotten. In its place we have what Hexham calls “secular gossip.” By this he means what appears in the mass media—on television and the radio and in magazines. We are inundated with bizarre stories of the (mis)deeds of “celebrities.” So we “are full of ‘lives.’ But they are the lives of pop singers, film stars, television personalities, and secular politicians” (p. 9), and not the lives of the heroic figures of Christian faith, as was once the case. This fact deeply troubles Hexham. Why?

Christianity is rooted in history. The New Testament begins with a genealogical table that most modern readers find almost

incomprehensible (Matthew 1:1–17). The purpose of this genealogy is to locate the birth of Jesus in space and time according to the standards of Jewish history. The appeal to ‘the first eye-witnesses,’ in the prologue to the gospel of Luke, is also intended to engage the skepticism of Greco-Roman readers by providing specific historical data against which ancient readers could weigh the writer’s claims (Luke 3:1–2). The Gospels contain many references to historical data and specific geographical locations. So important is historical truth that its denial becomes the mark of heresy. (p. 8)

According to Hexham, “the importance of history and the way in which we remember past events is recognized by many influential opponents of Christianity” (p. 8). He then points out that the most determined enemies of Christianity (he mentions Karl Marx and Adolf Hitler) made the control of history, or of its interpretation, the key to controlling the future (p. 8). In this manner they built in one way or another, Hexham believes, on Enlightenment skepticism about divine things. This has led, he believes, to the denial “of the validity of Christians history” (p. 8). But following the biblical model with its emphasis on remembrance, Hexham believes that “visiting places and seeing where great events took place help people remember and understand the present as well as the past” (p. 8). Hexham has fashioned these travel guides with this end in mind: the great deeds of the Christian past are worthy of remembering and can still enhance the faith of those who now travel the world. But can close encounters with the places where terrible deeds were done in the name of Jesus Christ, since this is often part of the larger story, also enhance or refine faith? For a Latter-day Saint, the answer has to be yes.

*The Christian Travelers Guide to Great Britain* is not, of course, an exhaustive account. But it provides in the first part a very useful brief account of British history and in the second part an explanation of English literature, art, music, and architecture, followed by a description of fifty-eight sites like London, York, and Cambridge. This volume, and the others in this series, can be recommended for Latter-

day Saints with an urge to actually learn something about what they are seeing while on holiday.

**Peter Charles Hoffer.** *Past Imperfect: Facts, Fictions, Fraud—American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin.* New York: Public Affairs, 2004. xiv + 287 pp., with index. \$26.00.

*Past Imperfect* is a remarkable book. It contains both an extensive commentary on recent instances of fabrication, plagiarism, and falsification by professional historians and a useful survey of the history of attempts by American historians to write about the past. Peter Hoffer, a distinguished University of Georgia historian with considerable experience in dealing with ethical issues among historians, sets out some of the reasons that it is not possible for historians to be neutral and objective and also why they are tempted to cheat. To set the stage for his examination of several recent instances of blatant misbehavior by several well-known historians, Hoffer describes the rise of professional standards that historians are presumed to follow, including the American Historical Association's guidelines for professional conduct, as well as the efforts to enforce these standards.

Hoffer describes some of the temptations to fabricate that historians face in their search for tenure, fame, and wealth. His examination of the misdeeds of some famous contemporary historians—Stephen Ambrose, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Michael Bellesiles, and Joseph Ellis—is judicious and fair, if not exhaustive. Ambrose was widely known for being what Hoffer describes as a “superb storyteller” (p. 176), evident in his acclaimed 1992 book *Band of Brothers*, a tale of a company of paratroopers in the 181st Airborne Division from D-day until the end of World War II. Ambrose found his career in shambles at the end of his life because of claims “that he improperly borrowed from others’ works, putting his name on what was not his—what Ambrose said added up to “about 10 pages out of a total work of some 15,000 pages in print” (p. 177). Hoffer is generous in his assessment of the scholarly sins of Ambrose.



The case of Joseph Ellis should be of special interest to Latter-day Saints. Walter V. Robinson, an investigative reporter at the *Boston Globe*, discovered that Ellis had fabricated an entire career as an antiwar protestor and active participant in the Vietnam War in his wildly popular lectures to undergraduate students at Amherst College and Mount Holyoke. Ellis, a gifted writer, had achieved notoriety for books such as the *Founding Brothers* (2000), in which he sought to turn the large figures in the founding of America into human beings. He was controversial because at first he “denied Thomas Jefferson’s relations with his slave Sally Hemings, then reversed himself on the issue” (p. 213). What Hoffer does not reveal is that it was also Ellis who, in an attempt to persuade voters that President Bill Clinton was just doing what others of large reputation had done previously, proclaimed there was DNA proof that Thomas Jefferson had fathered one of Hemings’s children. This was not exactly what the DNA studies had shown, since the father could have been the brother of Thomas Jefferson or one of his brother’s sons. Ellis clearly used his large reputation to distort the relevant DNA findings.

Hoffer demonstrates that even history done by properly credentialed, professional historians often does not and cannot reflect real events or persons. It is often not a matter of truth but of personal ambition or avarice, sometimes coupled with ideological passion and factional expediency. Even, or especially, when one encounters the essays of some obviously gifted, well-trained, professional historians, one may end up with blatant fraud and not just a difference of opinion about some complex, controversial issue. This is the conclusion of Hoffer’s judicious study of forgery, fabrication, and plagiarism in the history profession.

Hoffer shows that there is no single agreed-upon body of knowledge or interpretation that students of the past are expected to command. The work of historians provides a shifting array of opinions about the past. Despite this fact, Hoffer is right in arguing that there should be no dispute with respect to plagiarism, falsification of research, or misrepresentation of sources. Even more disconcerting is the discovery that books are published and then lauded that lack

careful historical scholarship and, in some cases, involve fraud. Hoffer attempts to explain why the scholarly sins of the prominent figures he examines are important even if the errors were, as was the case with Ellis, in lectures to students rather than in books. Such wrongdoing is deplorable. Latter-day Saints are constantly faced with it on the margins and outside the circle of faith, and sometimes from within.

To see the sour fruit of such misconduct, one only has to glance at Charles L. Wood's *The Mormon Conspiracy: A Review of Present Day and Historical Conspiracies to Mormonize America and the World* (2001), Grant H. Palmer's *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (2002), Richard Abanes's *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (2002), Matthew A. Paulson's *Breaking the Mormon Code: A Critique of Mormon Scholarship Regarding Classical Christian Theology and the Book of Mormon* (2006), or several recent books on the Mountain Meadows Massacre by agitated critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Saints are increasingly confronted by such shameful potboilers; they must also learn not to test their faith against the shifting sands of historical fads and fashions.

**Dean L. May and Reid L. Neilson, eds., with Richard Lyman Bushman, Jan Shipps, and Thomas G. Alexander. *The Mormon History Association's Tanner Lectures: The First Twenty Years*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006. xi + 406 pp., with notes on contributors and index. \$70.00 hardcover, \$30.00 paperback.**

The late O. C. Tanner, a Salt Lake City entrepreneur who had become wealthy in the jewelry business, funded various foundations, lectureships, and projects. The funds he provided for the Mormon History Association's annual Tanner Lecture support lectures by scholars outside the Latter-day Saint community. These scholars, who may or may not have previously been familiar with or even interested in Mormon things, must be willing to fashion a lecture drawing on their own skills and insights on some topic of interest to Latter-day Saint historians. The first of these lectures was delivered by Gordon Wood, a well-known American historian. Dean May and Reid Neilson's collection features twenty-one Tanner Lectures. Although all of

these lectures have previously been published, it is convenient to have them assembled in one volume.

The lectures are organized under topical headings within three broad categories. Richard Bushman introduces six lectures under the rubric “Beginnings,” Thomas Alexander introduces eight lectures related to the theme “Establishing Zion,” and Jan Shipps introduces seven lectures on the topic “Mormonism Considered from Different Perspectives.” As is often the case with such anthologies, the lectures as a whole are uneven. Some, however, are outstanding and have consequently drawn considerable attention. The intriguing lecture by Martin Marty, read at the 1983 MHA meetings in Omaha and titled “Two Integrities: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography,” has now been published in various versions four times. Because this material has been published before, the general introductions stood to enhance the anthology’s value for readers. Unfortunately, the introductions are uneven and bland, enough so that little would have been lost if the lectures had been reprinted in chronological order without editorial commentary.

**Shawn McCraney. *I Was a Born-Again Mormon: Moving Toward Christian Authenticity*. New York: Alatheia Press, 2003 (reprinted in April 2007). xvii + 359 pp., with bibliography. \$9.99.**

The fact that this book is self-published might explain why it is larded with typographical mistakes and garbled sentences. McCraney rambles and opines about how he sees Mormon things. His apostasy seems to be the result of his desolate youth and hence probably of his failure to ground his faith properly, which led to intense turmoil and confusion. His way out of the problem he created for himself has been to adopt a narrow version of a fundamentalist faith. He wants Latter-day Saints to follow his rebellion against the Church of Jesus Christ, while also urging those who do this to continue trying to appear to be regular faithful members of the community of Saints. He is hoping thereby to evangelize Latter-day Saints for the Calvary Baptist denomination, but without using the full range of resources generated by the countercult movement. The literature that led to his apostasy is

clearly not included in his bibliography (pp. 355–58), while even that literature upon which he now draws support is not mentioned, except in footnotes.

Even a casual reader is likely to notice glitches and garbling in McCraney's book. For example, the first seventeen printed pages are not paginated. The text includes references to items published after the original publication date. Either what McCraney calls a second printing is actually a somewhat revised edition or the publication date is simply wrong. It seems odd that McCraney actually includes in his bibliography such items as Bertrand Russell's *Why I am Not a Christian*, as well as four books by Jean-Paul Sartre. All of these set out a functional atheism. One wonders if McCraney thinks that this literature would assist one in becoming a born-again Christian. Or has he included such items in his bibliography to signal his reading habits? Be that as it may, he was apparently impressed by *Mormon America*, though he refers to Richard and Joan "Osling" rather than Ostling. This is typical of the content of this self-published screed. It is also noteworthy that Craig Hazen and Grant Palmer endorsed McCraney's book.

**D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens. *Who Are the Children of Lehi? DNA and the Book of Mormon*. Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007. 144 pp., with index. \$29.95.**

The beginning lines of "The Blind Men and the Elephant" have long been used as a caveat to be careful of conclusions that do not take into account the whole picture.

It was six men of Industan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.<sup>1</sup>

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1. John Godfrey Saxe (1816–1887), "The Blind Men and the Elephant: A Hindoo Fable," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 428.

And speaking of elephants, a statement attributed to the German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss again warns us of the fallibility of conclusions based on selected data: “Give me four parameters, and I will draw an elephant for you; with five I will have him raise and lower his trunk and his tail.”<sup>2</sup>

These caveats are of special relevance when it comes to the many claims and counterclaims about the ability of DNA data to prove or disprove the historicity and truth of the Book of Mormon. Fifty years ago, when I was a beginning DNA researcher, personnel in my lab and in most other laboratories working in the same field were convinced that although we had a pretty good idea of the structure of DNA, it would never be sequenced or used as a means to measure heredity in the simplest of organisms, let alone in humans. Now even the youngest child has heard about DNA and its great power in resolving the identity of individuals and their relationship to others. This power comes with a very substantial caveat as reflected in the quotations above. There is a great need to carefully examine our assumptions when attempting to draw conclusions based exclusively on the use of this methodology in areas where it is not the only methodology available.

Meldrum and Stephens have done an excellent job of providing in this small volume the tools necessary to evaluate the many problems associated with using DNA data to solve the Book of Mormon historicity issue.

Both authors are believing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and make it clear in the introductory chapters that they have a spiritual witness of the historicity and truth of the Book of Mormon as revealed to and translated by Joseph Smith. After explaining in relatively simple terms the science involved in tracing the genetic ancestry of individuals and populations, they point out the strengths and weaknesses of DNA science and go on to discuss the problems associated with using it to trace the origins of pre-Columbian American populations. They carefully explain the correct use of the principle of parsimony (Occam’s razor) and point out the weakness of

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2. Octave Levenspiel, “Catalytic Kinetics and Elephant Curves,” <http://levenspiel.com/octave/elephant.htm> (accessed 29 September 2008).

science as a tool to prove a negative. They conclude with the following statement:

We cannot conclude this book without a final comment about the evidence that continues to accumulate relevant to the historicity of this unique book of scripture. There is growing evidence for trans-oceanic contacts between the Old World and the New World that challenges the paradigm of an isolated Western Hemisphere singularly colonized by a founder population from Siberia. (p. 127)

For those who want a good source of information about DNA and its implications for identifying the origins of pre-Columbian American populations, I recommend this book as a good starting place. However, for those who do not have a good foundation in biology and its terminology, I recommend acquiring a good dictionary of biological terms in order to understand some of the more technical discussions.

*Lawrence Poulsen*

**Robert L. Millet and Gregory C. V. Johnson. *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical*. Foreword by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson. Rhinebeck, NY: Monkfish Book Publishing, 2007. xxxi + 185 pp., with appendixes. \$14.95.**

*Bridging the Divide* is said to be a continuation of a debate generated by the publication of Stephen Robinson's "blockbuster" (p. ix) apologetic work entitled *Are Mormons Christians?* (1991). Greg Vettel Johnson, then a student at Denver Theological Seminary, brought this book to the attention of the faculty there and then helped facilitate Robinson and Craig Blomberg's *How Wide the Divide?* (1997), which was dedicated to Greg Vettel (now Johnson). However, whatever else might be said about *Bridging the Divide*, it is not the next stage in the sophisticated debate one finds in *How Wide the Divide?* or in numerous other publications, including the *FARMS Review*. It is not serious scholarship. Instead, it is Robert Millet's way of taking advantage of

Pastor Greg Johnson's radical shift away from a Walter Martin mode of confrontational, adversarial sectarian anti-Mormonism (pp. 154–55).

Greg Johnson was a Latter-day Saint until he was fourteen, when he, with his mother, swallowed Walter Martin's version of anti-Mormonism. Johnson eventually discovered that Martin's countercult version of sectarian anti-Mormonism is both reprehensible and unproductive. *Bridging the Divide* contains the fruit of the radical shift that Pastor Johnson underwent in the 1990s. He has been grasping for a viable way of offering to the Saints his version of what he calls "orthodox, historical biblical Christianity" (p. 151). He insists that evangelicals should "change our methods, change our strategy" (p. 150), but his efforts to provide impetus to this new approach have met with much opposition—even (or especially) within conservative Protestant circles in Utah. It is not at all clear what he wants to offer the Church of Jesus Christ. He grants that evangelicals manifest great diversity but that "when it comes to the fundamental teachings of Christianity, there is encouraging unity on our biblical interpretation" (p. 110). He makes the adjective *biblical* do all the heavy lifting. He expresses a hope that God is at work in some way to bring about a transformation of Latter-day Saint faith so that its adherents might fit comfortably under the current version of the evangelical umbrella.

*Bridging the Divide* seems to be a much-refined, polished, edited "transcript" of one of the more than fifty conversations that have taken place between Millet and Johnson "in the last seven or eight years" (p. xii). These conversations, described as being impromptu interfaith dialogues and not debates or confrontations, are always spiced with audience participation. Part 1 of *Bridging the Divide* (pp. 1–32) consists of background information on Robert Millet, a popular Latter-day Saint speaker and author, and the Reverend Greg Johnson, a conservative Protestant pastor who currently operates a parachurch agency in Utah called "Standing Together." Part 2 (pp. 33–60) consists of questions and answers by Millet and Johnson and is followed by Part 3, "Questions from the Audience" (pp. 61–124). Part 4 (pp. 125–29) is a joint "conclusion" that articulates some truisms about the need to "straighten out much of the misperception that underlies misunderstanding" (p. 128)

and also the need to, “down the road, open doors, dissolve barriers, and make strait the way of the Lord” (p. 129). *Bridging the Divide* thus consists of sundry items representing in an idealized, polished form what has come to be known as the “Bob and Greg Show.”

Latter-day Saints would, of course, very much like to see a lessening of hostilities generated and fostered by the anti-Mormon element of the evangelical countercult movement. Can the Bob and Greg Show make that happen? Not likely. Greg Johnson is hopeful but not exactly enthusiastic since he asks his evangelical readers, “If God moved among the LDS Church [Johnson seems to have in mind the Brethren] to adjust, discover, clarify, give new perspective or emphasis to some areas of [Latter-day Saint] doctrine, would the Evangelical community just dismiss and mock Mormonism and Mormon people with the accusation of superficiality and dishonesty?” (p. 163). It appears that the evangelical community needs to believe that Latter-day Saints do not mean what they say and do not say what they mean. To the degree that evangelicals actually believe this is true, it seems that any honest effort to tone down evangelical hostilities faces obstacles within the diverse and often warring factions that constitute the evangelical “faith tradition.” One need not look far to see the kind of hatred generated by signs that moderate, civil evangelicals are turning away from the stereotypical countercult version of anti-Mormonism to advance the problem a kinder, gentler effort at evangelizing either the Church of Jesus Christ or individual Latter-day Saints. Reverend Johnson is not at all sure where these conversations are heading. Instead, he merely hopes that God in some inscrutable way will make something come from his initiative.

One serious flaw in this book is the failure of both Millet and Johnson to show an awareness that others beyond their tiny group of associates have been and are continuing to have useful, civil conversations with evangelicals and other Protestants, and also with Roman Catholics and Muslims. Many of these conversations are private, and others take the form of essays, which both Millet and Johnson and their close associates have chosen to ignore. Perhaps both Millet and Johnson only



recently came to discover the necessity and pleasures of discussing their faith with those with differing understandings.

**Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen, eds. *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, with a foreword by Martin E. Marty, a preface by Donald W. Musser, and an introduction by both Musser and Paulsen. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007. xiv + 562 pp., with index and scripture index. \$25.00.**

Even though this volume in some ways is more sophisticated than previous exchanges between Latter-day Saints and evangelicals, those fascinated by debates with evangelicals might be disappointed with *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*. The title of this collection of essays is misleading; its editors employed the word *contemporary*, but they could not have meant present, now, or current. Why? *Mormonism in Dialogue* begins with essays by non-evangelicals about Karl Barth (1886–1968), Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), and Paul Tillich (1886–1965), with spirited responses by Latter-day Saints. Many essays discuss theologies or theologians of essentially historical interest. With perhaps two exceptions, this volume consists of Latter-day Saint responses to essays by essentially Protestant liberal scholars about either versions of liberal theology or theologians whose influence is now primarily restricted to a narrow academic audience.

Except for perhaps Karl Barth, who still has a few followers among conservative Protestants or evangelicals, the opinions of these authors now tend to be historical curiosities and not live options for those in pulpits or pews on Sunday. In addition, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, there is no pressing reason for the Saints to be exposed to the opinions of Barth, Niebuhr, and Tillich or to the more recent and rather exotic theologies presented and debated in this volume.

In his insightful foreword, Martin Marty, a distinguished American church historian and occasional student of Mormon things, admits that “no doubt most readers in religion would not have selected a work that conjoins and juxtaposes Christian . . . theology and Mormon or Latter-day Saint thought” (p. vi). This would seem to be a

way of saying that this volume has a limited utility or audience. He therefore asks twice about this volume, “Why bother?” (p. vi). In his response to this question, Marty offers some useful insights into the differences between the Latter-day Saint insistence that their faith “is rooted in narrative” and typical Christian theologies that “combine the language of the Hebrew Scriptures with mainly Greek philosophical concepts as filtered through academic experiences in Western Europe, most notably Germany” (p. vii). Marty seems to recognize that the faith of the Saints is grounded in and consists of stories, both from the past and also their own now. “It may be,” according to Marty, “that this book will remind more Christians that their theology is also born of story and stories” (p. vii).

With one exception—Clark Pinnock—the contributors to this volume set out Protestant liberal theologies or try to explain, for example, in brief essays what Niebuhr, Tillich, and Barth thought. They are, as Marty recognizes, not informed about or perhaps not even interested in what Latter-day Saints believe, while “LDS scholars are far more at home with . . . Christian thought than vice versa” (p. ix). The reason, he explains, is that the Saints “earn their doctorates at Harvard or other graduate schools permeated with the concepts of Christian theology, even if and though they often return home to Brigham Young & Company” (p. ix). But the non-Latter-day Saint authors setting out the opinions of theologians like Niebuhr, Tillich, and Barth “with few exceptions . . . give little evidence that they boned up on LDS thought” (p. ix). Marty sees this as a serious flaw since the “book format necessarily keeps the Latter-day Saint scholars in a kind of responsive-defensive mode” (p. ix).

However, *Mormonism in Dialogue* provides a platform for some Latter-day Saint scholars to demonstrate their command of what is mostly contemporary Protestant liberal theology. In virtually every instance this is defensive. However, there are exceptions confined to the end of the volume (pp. 385–553), where especially James E. Faulconer (pp. 468–478) and James L. Siebach (pp. 462–467) respond to the sophisticated effort of David Tracy, an astute Roman Catholic theologian, who attempted to model for the Saints a possible way of linking philosophy

and theology (pp. 449–62). However, Siebach points out that for Latter-day Saints “talk about God rests in the domain of prophecy and decidedly not in the domain of natural or systematic theology” (p. 462). He concludes that what the Saints believe about divine things “lies more in the mantic than the sophic mode; it is more Hebrew than Greek” (p. 462). Without mentioning his name, Siebach mirrors the opinions of Hugh Nibley and others on this issue. In the most impressive portions of this volume, these insights are spelled out.

The final essays in this volume are among the most impressive; they consist of an exchange between Clark Pinnock (pp. 489–514, 542–45) and David Paulsen (pp. 515–42, 545–53) on what is now often called “open theology.” Pinnock is both a leading evangelical author and also willing to give Latter-day Saint beliefs serious attention. For this and other related reasons, he is currently being besieged by those in thrall to Augustinian/Calvinist understandings of God.

Is there an audience among evangelicals or Protestant liberals for the responses of Latter-day Saint scholars to theologians whose influence has now largely faded? Or are liberation, black, feminist, womanist, or process theologies of significant concern outside of narrow circles in the academic world to generate genuine concern among either Latter-day Saints or conservative Protestants? Or are evangelicals (or other conservative Protestants) interested in the responses of Latter-day Saints to these theologians or theologies? One wonders who the intended audience is for this collection of essays.

**Douglas A. Sweeney. *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005. 208 pp., with index and annotated suggestions for further reading appended to each chapter. \$17.99.**

*The American Evangelical Story* can be highly recommended as a reliable source for information and also for a deeper understanding of an important segment of religious history. Douglas Sweeney sorts out much of the confusion behind the various factions and ideologies that have been known as “evangelical.” In addition, he demonstrates that the label *evangelical* identifies an older and more diverse family of

religious ideologies than is commonly recognized, since the label as it is currently being used came on the scene after World War II.

Sweeney thus differs from those who tend to focus attention on the movement that in the 1940s was initially known as the “new evangelicalism” but soon began to call itself simply “evangelical.” In his final chapter, Sweeney traces the uneasy relationship of fundamentalism and evangelicalism. These are the two competing factions of conservative Protestants that Latter-day Saints are most likely to have encountered.

Sweeney demonstrates that the roots of evangelical religiosity go back much further. Hence he concludes that “evangelicalism is *not* fundamentalism and/or *neoevangelicalism*” (p. 156). Instead,

the evangelical movement dates from the early eighteenth century—preceding the rise of fundamentalism by almost two hundred years. All of *today’s* evangelicals have been touched by fundamentalism, but not to the same extent. . . . Many abandoned mainline Protestantism long before the period of its fundamentalist conflict. Many others proved more interested in issues of Christian piety than in the doctrinal matters dear to fundamentalist thinkers. (p. 156)

Sweeney also insists that the common definitions of *evangelical* are not adequate since there is no agreement on any one of them other than the word comes from the Greek in the New Testament (pp. 17–18). It is thus an open question whether *evangelical* means anything more than conservative rather than liberal Protestantism, but this is sufficient to warrant a closer look at why the evangelical movement, as diverse as it is, came to play its current role. Some writers, Sweeney notes, even argue that the label should be abandoned (pp. 21–22). Sweeney insists that the label identifies a very wide variety of Protestant factions that have family relationships and no common identity. Following some important recent scholarship, he traces the roots of these forms of religiosity to England and then to the Continent. He also demonstrates that all of these “self-professing evangelicals have actually commandeered this label, ignoring its use by groups that predate their movement by

centuries” (p. 19). He has in mind, among others, Lutherans who have called their denomination evangelical but who have nothing to do with the movement that collared the name *evangelical* in the 1940s and that now represents itself as historic, biblical, orthodox Christianity.

Through the activities of the sectarian countercult movement, American Latter-day Saints may have encountered some form of fundamentalism, with which the evangelical movement is often confused. Fundamentalism was an effort to fight Protestant liberalism, which had essentially captured the levers of influence and power in the mainline denominations. Sweeney quotes H. Richard Niebuhr (1894–1962), who, though clearly not a fundamentalist, wrote in 1937 that the liberals had given us “a God without wrath [who] brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross” (p. 161). Protestant liberalism manifested a fervent moral optimism that was at times associated with what was called the social gospel. In that guise it offered “soup, soap, and salvation” in the hope that “moral effort could help to usher in the millennium” (p. 163).

Fundamentalism was the main conservative response to liberalism (p. 156). In an attempt to regroup after it lost the battle within and hence control of the mainline Protestant institutions, those who would eventually call themselves fundamentalists met in Portland, Oregon, in 1892 and endorsed biblical inerrancy (p. 159). The resulting tug-of-war for control of Protestantism is known as the fundamentalist controversy (p. 164). Eventually the word *fundamentalist* came to identify the fight against Protestant liberalism and also bigotry and religious zealotry. When fundamentalists lost the battle for the Presbyterian Church, J. Gresham Machen began issuing *The Fundamentals*, and this publication cemented the label on that movement.

Sweeney thus ends his book where some other studies merely begin—that is, with what was initially known during and immediately after WWII as the “*new* (or neo-) evangelicals” (p. 170). The fact is that many who think of themselves as evangelicals imagine that this movement began immediately after WWII. There is some truth in this opinion. Billy Graham and his wealthy friends who created the maga-

zine *Christianity Today* (pp. 175, 176) were searching for respectability in the face of the embarrassment caused by belligerent fundamentalists. Others—for instance, those who founded the National Association of Evangelicals—also sought to rescue conservative Protestantism from fundamentalist “country bumpkins” (p. 170).

This new evangelical movement, compared with the earlier fundamentalists, showed “less concern to master the Christian martial arts” (p. 171). Instead, it sought to “infiltrate the culture with a winsome gospel witness” (p. 175). This movement soon went beyond the initial neo-evangelicalism. With *Christianity Today* came an effort made to provide an umbrella under which a host of widely different and even competing and conflicting groups, ideologies, and parachurch movements could strive to lend credence and respectability to conservative Protestantism, which had evaporated with the rise of the belligerent fundamentalism. The story of what Sweeney calls “*Fundamentalism and Neoevangelicalism*” (p. 155) involves the two connected but competing ideologies that Latter-day Saints typically confront, especially when they encounter the unseemly countercult movement that operates on the margins of contemporary conservative Protestantism.

All of this is merely the last chapter of the remarkable story Sweeney tells. In the earlier portions of his book, which take the movement back to less than three hundred years ago, there is no effort to see evangelicalism as the “Lord’s New Israel,” since it has proven itself “just as wayward as ancient Israel tended to be” (p. 11). Evangelicals, Sweeney argues, have never proved morally blameless, and he has not written this history to “puff evangelical pride” (p. 12). Instead, among other things, he demonstrates the “great wealth of evangelical diversity” (p. 19). Calvinists and Arminians, for example, both assemble under the evangelical umbrella, where they often slug it out. Sweeney argues that “when viewed from the perspective of our multiplicity, we evangelicals hold hardly anything in common. We are a people more remarkable for our differences than our union” (p. 20). It is a religious movement held together more by “family resemblance” than anything else (p. 21). Sweeney goes on to demonstrate that in this movement “white men are in the minority, few evangelicals are intellectuals, and

evangelical beliefs seldom conform to a standard Calvinistic world-view” (p. 22). The movement, whose adherents are “certainly not the only authentic Christians in the world,” is clearly not without its “nasty witch hunts and power plays” (p. 24).

Sweeney begins his story by tracing the evangelical movement in America to the Great Awakening (p. 36), which was a transatlantic affair involving continental Pietism (pp. 33–36) and John Wesley and especially the Moravians. Both Wesley and the Moravians turned up in Georgia in 1736. They were even on the same boat (pp. 37–38). Sweeney describes the role of George Whitefield (pp. 40–44) and Jonathan Edwards. What follows is a rich, complex, and fascinating series of remarkable stories. Sweeney then traces the larger story chronologically. He deals with an array of personalities, institutions, and missionary endeavors, as well as the slave problem, the subsequent religiosity of blacks, and the holiness of Pentecostal movements. Much of this story might annoy or embarrass strict “Five-Point Calvinists” or emissaries of the countercult movement who wish to engage in what Sweeney calls “worship wars.”

*The American Evangelical Story* is highly recommended to those Latter-day Saints who wish to understand the shape and contours—the stormy shore and hence shifting sands—of conservative Protestantism in America. There are many valuable nuggets in Sweeney’s fine book.

**John W. Welch and Larry E. Morris, eds. *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness*. Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2006. xii + 436 pp., with bibliography and index. \$19.95.**

Oliver Cowdery can plausibly be considered the cofounder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Commonly called the church’s “second elder” and, at one time, its “assistant president,” he wrote most of the Book of Mormon out by hand from dictation as Joseph Smith’s principal scribe, recopied the entire manuscript for the printer, and, as one of the Three Witnesses, beheld the angel Moroni, saw the plates, and heard the voice of God testify that the translation was correct.

With Joseph Smith, he was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist and to the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James, and John. He was at Joseph Smith's side in the Kirtland Temple on 3 April 1836, when Moses, Elias, Elijah, and the Savior himself appeared there to accept the newly dedicated building and to confer priesthood keys.

Yet Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from the church in April 1838 and lived as a non-Mormon for the next decade. In 1848 he was rebaptized, and two years later he died.

For obvious reasons, Latter-day Saint historians have found Cowdery extraordinarily interesting, and they have written numerous articles about his life and career. Now several of the very best of these have been gathered in *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness*—a book well worth the attention of anyone interested in the truth-claims of Mormonism and in its early history.

The cover of the book itself is important, as it features a recently discovered daguerreotype image of Oliver Cowdery that is discussed in an essay by Patrick Bishop. Other treasures include a brief biography of Cowdery by the premier expert on the Witnesses, Richard Lloyd Anderson (who also contributed essays entitled “The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio” and “Reuben Miller, Recorder of Oliver Cowdery’s Reaffirmations,” the latter dealing with the reliability of the scribe who recorded Cowdery’s testimony upon his return to the church); John W. Welch’s valuable essay “The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon”; Steven Harper’s “Oliver Cowdery and the Kirtland Temple Experience”; and Royal Skousen’s “Translating and Printing the Book of Mormon.” Altogether there are seventeen articles in the volume written by thirteen authors.

“Oliver Cowdery and the Restoration of the Priesthood,” compiled by Brian Q. Cannon and the *BYU Studies* staff, gathers and analyzes several statements from Cowdery on that important subject. Matthew Roper’s “Oliver Cowdery and the Mythical ‘Manuscript Found’” scrutinizes the hoary “Spalding Theory” of Book of Mormon authorship and finds it wanting (yet again).

Scott H. Faulring’s “The Return of Oliver Cowdery,” which won the T. Edgar Lyon Award of Excellence from the Mormon History



Association when it was first published in 2000, provides fascinating and even moving background to that 1848 event, which demonstrated Oliver Cowdery's continuing testimony of Mormonism at a time when the Saints were headed westward and when casting one's lot with them was anything but an easy road to prosperity or social status.

Larry Morris's article entitled "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism" dismantles persistent attempts to link Joseph Smith Sr. with Oliver Cowdery's father in a divining-rod incident that, so the theory goes, helps to explain (away) the founding of the church twenty-five years later. It also demolishes equally persistent efforts to tie Oliver Cowdery to Rev. Ethan Smith and, thereby, to portray the Book of Mormon as plagiarized from Rev. Smith's *View of the Hebrews*.

As if that weren't contribution enough, Morris's "'The Private Character of the Man Who Bore that Testimony': Oliver Cowdery and His Critics" defends Cowdery's reputation, intelligence, and honesty against writers who, in their ardent desire to negate his testimony, have attempted to besmirch his name. Morris, who is emerging as a treasure in his own right, demonstrates that the critics rely upon weak evidence, questionable sources, and circular reasoning in order to make their fatally flawed case.

The founding events of the restoration took place in the literal, material world. They were not metaphorical. They were not merely symbolic. Accordingly, they are of immense significance to all of humanity. Oliver Cowdery's unwavering eyewitness testimony of them, through persecution, suffering, illness, disappointment, anger, and even excommunication, is powerful evidence of their reality. This book provides powerful scholarly evidence that his testimony can be trusted.

*Daniel C. Peterson*

**N. T. Wright. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. xii + 195 pp., with bibliography and indexes of selected topics, modern authors, and text references. \$25.00.**

Although N. T. (Tony) Wright is the current Anglican Bishop of Durham, he is also a prolific author of learned essays and books on the New Testament. This is one of several of Wright's books that gently but

firmly challenge the common opinion among Protestant evangelicals that an essentially Augustinian and Reformation-based understanding of justification, commonly attributed to the Apostle Paul, is the key to Christian faith.

Wright is not alone in what is known as the “new perspective” on Paul. The common Protestant understanding is intensified by fundamentalists and evangelicals who insist on radically contrasting even obedience to moral law with what they call “faith alone.” But Wright and others have shifted the understanding of law, which Paul often refers to as “works,” a word he uses to identify ceremonial matters such as circumcision and Sabbath observances required under the Torah. Wright insists that for the followers of Jesus the Mosaic law was fulfilled in him and hence the old ceremonial law was no longer required; faith became the sign of the new testament (covenant). Wright, quite unlike Protestants generally, thus emphasizes the importance of the new covenant in Paul’s scheme of things. This requires repentance and faith in Jesus. In this new covenant, circumcision was no longer a required work. Faith is manifested by obedience to the commandments of God, and obedience leads eventually to sanctification (or what was also called deification).

Wright reaches his startlingly nonevangelical understanding by entering into what he calls “the Three Worlds of Paul” (p. 3): Second Temple Judaism (marked by a central concern for a covenant relationship with God); the dominating “Greek, or Hellenistic,” world; and the Roman world. Paul was, Wright argues, at home in each of these. Wright argues that Paul advanced a profoundly covenantal theology. The language he quoted was all part of a series of connected “implicit stories” (p. 11). Those who heard Paul’s language “believed themselves to be *actors within* a real-life narrative” (p. 11) in much the same way that those drawn to restoration stories of gospel fulness see themselves as God’s covenant people. Those who heard Paul were reminded of their being part of a “*single, larger story* which stretched from the creation of the world and the call of Abraham right forwards to their own day, and (they hoped) into the future” (p. 11). Put another way, “God did not abandon his people when he packed them off to Babylon”

(p. 12), but he found ways to keep his promises to his people with a new covenant. This is clearly not the Paul of the Protestant notion of justification by faith alone, but a much different way of reading his letters.

But evangelicals might ask if Wright's new perspective on Paul, since it differs radically from their own, is objective, detached, neutral. Wright's answer is that "neutrality is impossible" (p. 15). Recently, he points out, "a little pin," as he calls it, has managed "to bore through the castle walls of imperial objectivism" (p. 15). He insists that "the only way forward from this point is by means of a robust critical realism . . . far removed both from the revived positivism on offer in some quarters and the enthusiastic subjectivism advanced elsewhere, and dependent for its effectiveness on the power, once more, of the stories it tells" (p. 15). He insists that "it should come as a relief not to have to aim at an impossible objectivity" (p. 17). Sounding much like Latter-day Saints who have addressed these same issues, Wright argues that "modernity's all-important Self—proud, self-reliant, knowable, and self-affirming—has been deconstructed into a mass of floating signifiers" (p. 173). The new being demanded by Paul's stories of the Messiah and the covenant one makes with him in baptism is not the *self* of self-realization, self-interest, or a host of other attributes attached to the word that has taken the place of the soul in recent ideologies.

Wright shows that "the basic Christian mode of knowing is love," and hence it is not to be found by reducing everything to a power play and a world where everything is reduced to "currency and commodity" (p. 173), or what we could call values. Unlike most evangelicals, Wright accepts "the postmodern critique of modernity" (p. 172), but he does not think that critique has the last word. It has, however, shown that "modernity stands accused of arrogance, with its technology, its philosophy, its economics and its empires—and, in a measure at least, its theology and exegesis" (p. 172), but "postmodernity does not give us a new home, a place to stay" (p. 172).

It seems that, on the one side, Latter-day Saints struggling with a resurgence of belligerent, dogmatic atheism grounded in modernity, and on the other side, conservative Protestants who are also often

heavily influenced by strands of this same (until recently) dominant objectivist ideology have found in Tony Wright a new compatriot—one not entirely unlike the late C. S. Lewis.