



2015

Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy

Gerrit van Dyk

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

van Dyk, Gerrit (2015) "Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 54 : Iss. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol54/iss4/12>

This Notice is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Textual and Comparative Explorations in 1 and 2 Enoch by Samuel Zinner (Orem, Utah: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014).

Samuel Zinner (PhD, University of Nebraska–Lincoln), an independent researcher and Holocaust scholar, publishes his extensive studies on 1 and 2 *Enoch* in a new book from The Interpreter Foundation. Zinner performs a valuable service in this series of nineteen essays by taking on some of the most difficult questions in the field of Enoch studies. He provides new and refreshing perspectives on a wide variety of topics that range from the issue of the identification in 1 *Enoch* of Enoch as “the Son of Man” to textual and historical problems in the texts of both 1 and 2 *Enoch* that have puzzled scholars for decades. His explorations respond to some of the biggest players in the field, including George Nickelsburg, James VanderKam, and Daniel Boyarin. The majority of the essays focus on issues surrounding the text of 1 *Enoch*, which is perhaps the more widely known and read of the Enoch writings, but he also touches on some interesting and important topics from 2 *Enoch* as well. The last chapter of the book provides an analysis by Zinner, who is not LDS, of the topics of Zion/Jerusalem and Lady Wisdom in early Jewish texts and also in Moses 7 and the Tree of Life vision in 1 Nephi.

Zinner takes an innovative approach to a number of problems and controversies in the field, making several positive contributions. His discussions on the title “Son of Man,” both as it is applied to Enoch and as it is used in 1 *Enoch* and the biblical book of Daniel, are helpful for making sense of a phenomenon in early Jewish and Christian writings that depicts the *apotheosis* (or deification) of human beings so that they can function in the celestial realm. He also compares

his conclusions for the Enochic writings to what early Christians believed about Christ, providing a helpful perspective. He tackles the question of the dating of some of the Enochic writings (he argues for an earlier date than is commonly suggested) and whether this extrabiblical text had an influence on canonical books such as Daniel. Zinner’s essay on Zion as Lady Wisdom, how this idea is expressed in both biblical and extrabiblical texts, and how Zinner sees parallels in Restoration scripture is a fascinating perspective that most LDS readers will not have encountered previously.

Because Zinner engages the texts he analyzes at a high level of scholarship, this book will be of interest to those who have previous experience with a serious study of the Enochic, and related, literature. Latter-day Saint readers with at least a moderate interest in and experience with these texts will likely find the discussions of the Son of Man and also the last chapter involving Restoration scripture to be refreshing and useful.

—David J. Larsen

Standing Apart: Mormon Historical Consciousness and the Concept of Apostasy, edited by Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

While there have been dozens of important devotional books about Mormonism and its doctrinal concept of the Great Apostasy, little has been published from a scholarly perspective. Ten years ago, BYU Press published a collection of new studies about the Apostasy in *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy* (2005; reviewed in *BYU Studies* 44:3), and there has been a smattering of articles over the years on

the subject, including Eric Dursteler's important "Inheriting the 'Great Apostasy: The Evolution of Mormon Views on the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.'" Dursteler's essay was originally published in *Journal of Mormon History* (2002), subsequently reprinted in *Early Christians in Disarray*, and now included in *Standing Apart* in an updated and revised form. Dursteler's chapter is the only previously published contribution of *Standing Apart's* thirteen excellent chapters (fourteen if you include Terryl Givens's epilogue).

The editors, Miranda Wilcox and John D. Young, are associate professor of English at Brigham Young University and associate professor of history at Flagler College, respectively. Wilcox specializes in medieval literature, and Young specializes in medieval history.

Wilcox and Young have set out to address the relatively narrow focus of the LDS Great Apostasy Narrative, which tends to disparage, or at least discount, Christian theologians and historians after the death of the original Apostles until AD 1820. Each contributor to *Standing Apart* attempts to contextualize and perhaps complicate this narrative by showing a more nuanced approach to this period of Christian

history. As was mentioned, Dursteler's updated work on the Great Apostasy establishes a strong foundation for the remaining chapters. Both of the editors also have their own contributions to the volume. Without reviewing every chapter in the book due to space, some highlights might be excused.

Of particular note, Spencer Young offers a fine piece on the rich intellectual and spiritual environment that was the Middle Ages, a period too often viewed as theologically and artistically backwards and provincial. Lincoln Blumell discusses the documents and sources surrounding the Council of Nicaea, encouraging Latter-day Saints to reconsider some of their assumptions about the Nicene Creed as it relates to Christian and LDS theology. Additionally, David D. Peck draws parallels between Mormonism and Islam, their views of religious pluralism, and each religion's acknowledgement of divine inspiration among members of other faiths.

Readers familiar with LDS theology will find each of the chapters in *Standing Apart* insightful and well researched. Scholars of early Christianity and Mormonism will likewise benefit from the academic treatment of this topic.

—Gerrit van Dyk