The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract

I hope this study, however preliminary it might appear, will provide a sound first step toward developing our self-understanding as Latter-day Saints of the history of Book of Mormon use in the twentieth century and the phenomenal increase in understanding, appreciation, and study that has taken place over the last three to four decades. This study may also offer one useful perspective for the gradually emerging history of cultural Mormonism and its antipathy to the Book of Mormon. This study is grounded in the analysis of a number of possible indicators of intensity of interest in the Book of Mormon and in a dozen interviews with people who were directly involved in some of the more significant developments of the last half century. In the absence of any readily available scale that directly measures the phenomenon I wish to illuminate, I have collected a number of measures which would intuitively seem to be directly linked to it. These include statistical summaries of Book of Mormon references or citations in LDS literature and general conference addresses, as well as counts of publications related to the Book of Mormon. Almost no comparative statistical analyses have been attempted because of the incommensurability of the various indicators.

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Skeptics have put forth several theories of Book of Mormon authorship that do not require believing in golden plates delivered by angels and translated by a miracle. These range from the now-discredited Spaulding theory, to inspiration from an obscure German fairy tale called The Golden Pot, to collaboration with Oliver Cowdery or Sidney Rigdon. But the simplest and arguably most popular theory is that Joseph himself was the primary author. In the twenty-first century, it’s almost tautological that one learns at school, and school is where one learns. But in the nineteenth century it was more common than not to take advantage of informal tutoring as well as school attendance in the way we think of it today. Joseph had ample opportunity for such informal tutoring.

Did Joseph Smith plagiarize the Book of Mormon? The Know. When the Book of Mormon was published in March 1830, it was greeted by many skeptics who sought an explanation for its existence other than the account offered by Joseph Smith. One early critic, Alexander Campbell, confidently affirmed that “never was a book more evidently written by one set of fingers, nor more certainly conceived in one cranium since the first book appeared in human language” than the Book of Mormon. Nor do such arguments account for the circumstances of its coming forth, including its rapid dictation, lack of revisions, and the testimonies of those who handled the plates and beheld the angel. Joseph Smith testified that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God.

Why was required to wait four years from the time he first saw the gold plates until he received them from Moroni? 1. Needed to become mature 2. All in the Lord’s time. True or False: There were times when Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by putting a single seer stone in a hat and then putting his face in the hat to block out the light. True. Who are the three witnesses? 1. Oliver Cowdery 2. Martin Harris 3. David Whitmer. What is the principle of one by one discussed in class? Salvat