

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Macmillan Publishing Company
New York

Maxwell Macmillan Canada
Toronto

Maxwell Macmillan International
New York Oxford Singapore Sydney



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people mature. These factors build on the relationships and activities experienced by teenagers, but as these young people leave home, institutes of religion near college campuses, wards composed of students and singles, and Church institutions of higher learning, such as BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY, provide young adults with additional opportunities to develop relationships with dedicated leaders and teachers and with peers who have similar values.

For many young men and women, service as a full-time missionary is a powerful experience in the transmission of spiritual values from the Church to the individual. Working as a full-time missionary for eighteen months (for women) or two years (for men) becomes for many a rite of passage from a culturally based religious identity to one that is spiritually based, or internalized. During this time, many benefits of gospel instruction, the BAPTISMAL COVENANT, PRIESTHOOD ORDINATIONS and blessings, and the temple ENDOWMENT are realized and become securely embedded as one's ideals for life.

This religious identity gives the young adult an image of what it means to be a religious person, a son or daughter of God, a disciple of Jesus Christ, a member of the Church. Seeing oneself as wanting and striving to be consistent with those images gives much of the meaning and purpose to LDS life. Church members often describe the experience of receiving a witness or testimony from the Holy Ghost as a sacred moment, which contributes to, or further solidifies, their commitment to the gospel of Christ and their personal identity within the community of Saints.

[See also Individuality; Leadership Training.]

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STAN E. WEED

VIEW OF THE HEBREWS

Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (Poultney, Vt., 1823; second enlarged edition, 1825) combines scriptural citations and reports from various observers among American Indians and Jews to support the claim that the Indians were the descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. It is one of several books reflecting the popular fascination at the time of Joseph Smith with the question of Indian origins. While some have claimed it to be a source for the Book of Mormon, no direct connections between this book and the Book of Mormon have been demonstrated.

The full title of the 1825 edition is *View of the Hebrews; or the Tribes of Israel in America. Exhibiting the Destruction of Jerusalem; the Certain Restoration of Judah and Israel; the Present State of Judah and Israel; and an Address of the Prophet Isaiah to the United States Relative to Their Restoration*. The author, Ethan Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith), was pastor of the Congregational church in Poultney, Vermont.

The first chapter deals with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans, as referred to in scriptural prophecy and historical sources. The second chapter tells of the literal expulsion of the Ten Tribes of Israel in 721 B.C. and the establishment of the kingdom of Judah; it also maintains that their restoration will be literal, and it quotes heavily from Isaiah. The third chapter summarizes the outcast condition of Israel in 1823; it also argues that the natives of America are "the descendants of Israel" and propounds that all pre-Columbian Americans had one origin, that their language appears originally to have been Hebrew, that they had an ark of the covenant, that they practiced circumcision, that they acknowledged one and only one God, that their tribal structure was similar to Hebrew organization, that they had cities of refuge, and that they manifest a variety of Hebraic traits of prophetic character and tradition. These claims are supported by citations from James Adair and Alexander von Humboldt. The fourth chapter emphasizes the restoration of Israel, quoting from Isaiah and using Isaiah chapter 18 to create an "Address" to the United States to save Israel. In conclusion, Ethan Smith pleads that the "suppliants of God in the West" be faithful and helpful in bringing scattered Israel "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion."

Alleged relationships of *View of the Hebrews* to the Book of Mormon have attracted interest pe-

riodically through the years. Ethan Smith's book was published in the adjoining county west of Windsor County, where Joseph Smith was born and lived from 1805 to 1811. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever knew anything about this book. Detractors have pointed to several "parallels" between the two books, but others point to numerous "unparallels"; as two of many examples, the Book of Mormon never mentions an ark of the covenant or cities of refuge.

I. Woodbridge Riley in 1902 was the first author to suggest a relationship between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon (*The Founder of Mormonism*, New York, 1902, pp. 124–26). In 1921, LDS Church authorities were asked to reply to questions posed by a Mr. Couch of Washington, D.C., regarding Native American origins, linguistics, technology, and archaeology. B. H. Roberts, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, undertook a study of Couch's issues; he received some assistance from a committee of other General Authorities. Roberts's first report, in December 1921, was a 141-page paper entitled "Book of Mormon Difficulties." However, he was not satisfied with that work and later delved more deeply into other critical questions about Book of Mormon origins, which led him to a major analysis of *View of the Hebrews*.

Around March–May 1922, Roberts wrote a 291-page document, "A Book of Mormon Study," and an eighteen-point summary entitled "A Parallel." In the "Study" Roberts looked candidly at the possibility that Joseph Smith could have been acquainted with Ethan Smith's book and could have used it as a source of the structure and some ideas in the Book of Mormon. He cited some twenty-six similarities between the two books. In all his writings, Roberts did not draw any conclusions that Joseph Smith used Ethan Smith's work to write the Book of Mormon, but rather posed questions that believers in the Book of Mormon should be aware of and continue to find answers for. Roberts's faith in the Book of Mormon as divinely revealed scripture was unshaken by his studies.

Roberts's papers were published in 1985. This again stirred an interest in the relationship of *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon, especially since the editorial "Introduction" concluded that "the record is mixed" as to whether Roberts kept his faith in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon after making his studies (B. D. Madsen, p. 29). Subsequent research, however, strongly

indicates that Roberts remained committed to the full claims of the origin and doctrine of the Book of Mormon to the end of his life (Welch, pp. 59–60), and substantial evidence favors the position that there is little in common between the ideas and statements in *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon.

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VIRGIN BIRTH

Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, was a virgin at the time of Jesus' birth. Of Old Testament prophets, ISAIAH alone foretold this circumstance (Isaiah 7:14), but Book of Mormon prophets also foresaw the virgin birth. NEPHI₁ described Mary as "a virgin, most beautiful and fair" and "mother of the son of God, after the manner of the flesh" (1 Ne. 11:15, 18). ALMA declared that Christ "shall be born of Mary . . . a virgin . . . who shall . . . conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God" (Alma 7:10).

In fulfillment of these prophecies, Gabriel "was sent from God . . . to a virgin . . . and the virgin's name was Mary," and Gabriel announced to her that she would "bring forth a son, and . . . call his name Jesus." To her question, "How shall this be?" Gabriel answered, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . therefore [the child] . . . born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:26–35). Thereafter, Joseph married Mary but "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (Matt. 1:25). Thus, Jesus was born of a mortal mother who was a virgin.

[See also Immaculate Conception; Mary, Mother of Jesus.]

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