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# Between Exegesis and Homiletics: Examining the Genres at Play in an LDS Commentary

*D. Jill Kirby*

Review of Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes. *The Revelation of John the Apostle*. Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2013.

THE AIM OF THE BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY New Testament Commentary (BYUNTC) series is ambitious: to “offer a responsible, carefully researched, multi-volume commentary” that “will combine the best of ancient linguistic and historical scholarship with Latter-day Saint doctrinal perspectives” while remaining accessible to the general reader.<sup>1</sup> With respect to this particular volume, Richard Draper and Michael Rhodes have indicated a number of objectives, methods, and perspectives intended to fulfill these more general goals. Overall, they intend “to bring John’s writing into its fullest light.” To do this they will (1) “for the first time . . . bring together everything relevant to the book of Revelation that can be found in the Mormon tradition”;<sup>2</sup> (2) take “a hard look at the Greek texts and their variants and render a new and careful translation”; and (3) place Revelation “in its historical context using information from John’s world,” which, they say, will produce “a

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1. See <http://www.byunewtestamentcommentary.com/about-us/the-project/>.

2. Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Revelation of John the Apostle*, BYU New Testament Commentary Series (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2013), Kindle location 721. All citations to Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, are to Kindle locations as this work is not yet in print. All emphasis is added unless otherwise noted.

complete examination of every verse in Revelation within its historical setting.”<sup>3</sup> These goals are generally typical of modern commentaries, and their achievement would be a welcome addition to Latter-day Saint biblical scholarship. Unfortunately, the present volume falls short of accomplishing these aims.

In this review I intend to organize my comments around considerations of commentary genres. Although Draper and Rhodes do not specifically identify the type of commentary they intended to create, the goals listed above shed some light on the matter. Generally speaking, biblical commentaries fall into four categories: reception history, exegetical, homiletic, and finally, personal reflection or meditation. Draper and Rhodes appear to have intended to produce a mixed-genre commentary. Thus, their assertion that they have presented all the relevant information in the LDS tradition is consistent with reception history approaches. Their interest in describing what John meant, their work with translation, and their claim to read Revelation verse by verse in its historical context indicate an exegetical commentary. Finally, the authors’ overt faith commitment in the early pages alerts the reader that there will be homiletic content as well as a presentation of more personal reflections and confessional interests. Since this work is produced from within the academic community, under the BYU series title, I will also evaluate it according to the standards for modern scholarly work. I have made no attempt, however, to provide an analysis of coherence with LDS doctrine.

## Reception history

Reception histories tend to be reference works from the academic world; their focus is on showing how the biblical text has been understood during various later periods, not on how the author or earliest audiences might have understood it. They are organized around the content and flow of the text so that readers can see how others have used

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3. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 758.

the text for their purposes. The challenge reception histories inevitably face is twofold. First, the sheer volume of information available must be carefully considered in order to provide appropriate representation; this requires selectivity. Second, reception histories must provide some historical context for readers to appreciate the circumstances that led to a particular appropriation. Although the present commentary is not strictly a reception history, the standards above provide some guidance by which readers may judge the way Draper and Rhodes have documented the reception of Revelation in the LDS community.

The most prominent claim made regarding reception by Draper and Rhodes is that they have brought “together everything relevant to the book of Revelation that can be found in the Mormon tradition.”<sup>4</sup> With respect to the contributions of male elites from within the LDS tradition, this may well be correct—and such a collection is a fine addition to LDS biblical studies. However, the omissions are also striking. For example, no LDS women are quoted or alluded to by name.<sup>5</sup> This cannot be because the authors equated *relevant* with *authoritative* since the male voices cited are not uniformly quoted from sources considered binding on the LDS community. Nor is it because women’s insights are all that difficult to find or that they played no role in LDS life.<sup>6</sup> Whatever

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4. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 720.

5. The only insight offered from an LDS woman comes from Professor Gaye Strathearn, a colleague of the authors. However, her name, and thus her gender, appears only in the documentation of the appropriate chapter and not in either the text itself or the select bibliography. This lack of by-name citation follows an unusual convention adopted by Draper and Rhodes of refraining from mentioning academic sources by name, although they are very dependent on the scholarly work of many others. Hopefully, future volumes will adopt academic conventions and acknowledge their indebtedness with more grace.

6. For example, no mention is made of historical figures such as Eliza R. Snow or of Joseph Smith’s intention to make of the Relief Society “a kingdom of priests.” Likewise, modern women who have served in LDS leadership roles are not quoted. Finally, a cursory search of the *Women’s Exponent*, accessed online through the Harold B. Lee Library, yields numerous opportunities for understanding how early LDS women understood themselves and their relationships in the light of some of John’s ideas as they were interpreted by Joseph Smith.

the reason for their exclusion, the absence of women's voices indicates that the LDS tradition presented in this commentary is neither complete nor even fairly represented by the authors.

A second omission is the lack of historical context provided for those voices that are cited from within the LDS tradition. Far too often, quotations and insights are given without dates, let alone any information about the circumstances that led to the expressed insight. LDS historians may be able to fill in these details, but the general LDS reader, as well as those who might consult this work from outside the LDS community, will be left without the context needed to evaluate what is being said. This lack of historical context becomes critical when readers engage ideas within the LDS tradition such as what Draper and Rhodes call the "election in the flesh." This nineteenth-century LDS concept suggests, among other things, that those who enjoy the LDS priesthood are the biological descendants of early Christians who possessed a similar priestly privilege.<sup>7</sup> The idea of superior bloodlines is fraught with difficulties, and in the present climate of racial and ethnic sensitivities it should have been presented with the historical and cultural context from which it emerged. Pastoral sensitivity might also have indicated that speculation regarding bloodlines is not often raised by modern LDS leaders or mentioned in LDS discourse outside of historical interests.<sup>8</sup>

## Exegetical commentary

Exegetical commentaries, which are the foundation of modern biblical study, tend to focus on illuminating the meaning of a biblical text for its earliest audiences with correspondingly less attention to strictly modern interests. They usually contain a translation, a lengthy introductory section, and detailed exegesis. Good exegetical commentaries are

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7. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 11358.

8. Because the rigorous study of LDS history is itself rather recent, adequate information on the historical context of early LDS ideas may not yet be available. In these cases, prudence might dictate a more selective approach, focused, perhaps, on presenting the most insightful instances of LDS reception.

academic reference works: they should be up-to-date, reliable, delivered in a measured and deliberative tone, attentive to calling the reader's attention to areas of consensus and disagreement, complete in the sense that they provide access to a broad range of interpretive options and relevant secondary literature, and respectful of opinions or positions with which they disagree.<sup>9</sup> I will evaluate the exegetical work of this commentary under three broad areas: the translation, the introductory material, and the exegesis.

### *Translation—the BYU rendition*

Unlike earlier LDS work with scripture, this volume provides a fresh English version of John's narrative that is a fine addition to LDS biblical scholarship.<sup>10</sup> The word *rendition* rather than *translation* is used to describe this work because at points the authors have elected to insert textually unsupported emendations or interpretive glosses. Supporting the rendition is a set of translation notes. These notes convey information about translation choices and alert the reader to the presence of emendations or glosses. As a means of helping Latter-day Saints who lack experience with the issues of translation understand just how difficult it is to render a reasonably faithful translation, they are very worthwhile. The rendition itself is less useful because of irregular shifts from a modern translation to emendations such as the Joseph Smith Translation (JST). A better approach would have been to confine the rendition to a translation, as is the common practice in academic commentaries, and to put the JST and other emendations in the notes or endnotes.

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9. For example, one form of disrespectful discourse is the assertion by Draper and Rhodes that those who take a different approach "do not accept any revelatory power behind John's work" (Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 16614). In academic discourse, ideas are evaluated on their merits and not on the faith commitments of their proponents. Hopefully, this sort of ad hominem argument can be avoided in future volumes. Draper and Rhodes also refer to "the self-proclaimed orthodox community including such sects as the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic" traditions (Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 810). The point they wish to make should have been made professionally using neutral language.

10. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 752.

Most of the emendations in the rendition come from the JST. Thus, the “angel of the church” associated with each of the seven cities in Asia Minor is rendered as the “leader of the church.” John’s work undoubtedly read “angel,” but the change follows the footnoted entries in the LDS edition of the King James Version (KJV) and is of minor interpretive import.<sup>11</sup> However, the JST is not uniformly included in the rendition—that is, some of its readings are included while others are not. If there is an explanation for decisions about inclusion, I did not find it. In addition, Draper and Rhodes do not tell the reader how they understand the relationship between the autograph and the JST.<sup>12</sup> This is a missed opportunity to explore an interesting aspect of the relationship between the LDS tradition and early Christianity—exactly the sort of thing readers might expect from a commentary series associated with BYU.

Unfortunately, the rendition also demonstrates some distortion of John’s narrative under the interpretive assumptions employed by Draper and Rhodes. At Revelation 14:4 John provides a description of the 144,000 who stand with the Lamb on Mt. Zion.<sup>13</sup> According to John, this group are those “who have not defiled themselves with women for they are *male virgins*.” Draper and Rhodes elect to insert an interpretive gloss in the text of the rendition, writing “these are they who have not defiled themselves with women for they are *morally clean*.”<sup>14</sup> Two reasons for this gloss are given. First, they assert that the English word *virgin* applies exclusively to females. Actually, *Merriam-Webster* includes the denotation “a person who has not had sexual intercourse,”

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11. What has usually bothered readers of Revelation about the idea of John writing instructions to angels is that they assume a hierarchy in which angels “outrank” humans. In this case, however, it is quite possible to read John as a prophetic voice to the angels of the seven churches; the authority is not his but Christ’s.

12. The autograph of a biblical text is the original. The idea of an original text for biblical books as modern readers understand the expression is not uniformly accepted, but the term remains somewhat useful in the present context for describing the temporal distinction between the JST and very early manuscripts.

13. The translation notes and comments for Revelation 14:4 are disordered; this may be a technical error arising from the Kindle format.

14. Ironically, the title of the section is “The Virgins (14:1–5).”

without mention of gender.<sup>15</sup> Second, the authors indicate that they wish “to counter the idea that this verse commends celibacy.”<sup>16</sup> On its face, it is hard to read what John wrote without concluding that the text *does* commend celibacy. However, Draper and Rhodes defend their choice by pointing out instances in biblical literature outside of Revelation and from within the wider LDS tradition in which marriage is commended and sexual sin is condemned. This demonstrates how the assumption of unity of scripture distorts interpretation. Draper and Rhodes have *assumed* that John’s ideas about marriage and celibacy are identical with that of other biblical authors and the LDS tradition and thus forced the rendition to follow suit. In fact, John wrote *male virgin*; the expression is rare but present in other literature; moral purity is only one of at least four possible interpretations, and of the four, probably the most unlikely.<sup>17</sup> One interpretation that would cohere with both John’s language and a high view of marriage is temporary celibacy, an idea found in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In the end, the best way to handle this sort of divergence from the LDS tradition is the conventional one in academic works: list the options and argue their suitability. Moreover, the appropriate way to avoid distorting the text while also asserting that John himself is not a misogynist and does not commend literal, permanent celibacy is to argue first from textual evidence within Revelation, such as the fact that the cosmic woman of chapter 12 is a mother and the New Jerusalem is symbolized as a virgin about to become the wife of the Lamb.<sup>18</sup>

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15. *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. “virgin.”

16. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 13752.

17. The four possibilities are moral purity; literal and permanent celibacy; figuratively, as a metaphor for refusing to worship the beast; and as a reference to the temporary abstinence required of priests and soldiers in the Hebrew Bible.

18. A second instance of this same distortion in favor of the LDS tradition is in the rendition of Revelation 13:8. Here Draper and Rhodes have followed Moses 7:47 rather than Revelation 17:8 in suggesting that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world rather than that selected names were included in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

A final suggestion for future volumes is the use of inclusive language. As the rendition already facilitates interpretive goals beyond translation, this seems like an opportunity to explicitly acknowledge the presence of women in early Christianity. For example, Revelation 6:11 might be rendered as it is in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): “they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow servants and of their *brothers and sisters*, who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.” Given that the KJV, currently the “official” version of the Bible among English-speaking Latter-day Saints, contains readings that have been changed to marginalize the contributions of early Christian women, the rendition might serve to sensitize LDS readers to the gender biases that are rarely acknowledged in the LDS tradition.<sup>19</sup>

### *Introductory material*

The introductory section of a commentary gives readers their first insight into the work of a commentary’s author. A typical introduction in an exegetical commentary includes information on the historical context, genre, structure, and theology. Depending on the text and audience, sometimes issues such rhetorical strategy, narrative analysis, textual criticism, style, or reception history are also discussed. To an extent, the selection of topics for an introductory section is up to an author; however, some topics are considered necessary in major academic works. Additionally, readers may expect an up-to-date, complete presentation of the topics selected as well as citations of recent and more detailed studies.

Ideally, careful attention to the introductory section by a commentary’s author and its readers rewards both because thoughtful, well-written essays establish something of a shared understanding upon which more

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19. For example, since English-speaking Latter-day Saints use the KJV, they tend to be unaware that Romans 16:7 probably shows Paul identifying a woman named Junia as “prominent among the apostles” or that the author of Colossians wishes to greet “Nympha and the church in her house” (Colossians 4:15 NRSV) rather than “Nymphas, and the church which is in his house” (Colossians 4:15 KJV).

detailed work may rest. For the purposes of this particular commentary, the first in a series intended for Latter-day Saints who have had almost no exposure to critical thinking about biblical texts, let alone familiarity with historical-critical methods, this section presented a great opportunity to produce an academic-quality introduction to modern biblical scholarship while setting the stage for a close reading of Revelation.<sup>20</sup> Regrettably, there are some deficiencies.

Very little of the introductory section dealing with Revelation itself is original or new work by Draper and Rhodes. In addition to reusing text from Draper's earlier work, *Opening the Seven Seals*, Draper and Rhodes use close paraphrases of authors such as G. K. Beale, Robert H. Mounce, and I. T. Beckwith. Their section on "Dating and Interpretive Approaches" is a paraphrase and summary of Beale's work.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, their interpretive options are incomplete because Beale is not explicit about his own work. They list the preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist schools but fail to report that most modern commentaries are eclectic—that is, they involve two or more of the traditional approaches.<sup>22</sup> In particular, modern academic readings tend to be preterist-idealist but usually allow that John intended his work to portray what was to happen at the end of time (futurist) without aiming to provide a detailed countdown.

The presentation of the literary features of Revelation—that is, genre, style, and structure—is both incomplete and dated. Draper and Rhodes describe the genre of Revelation as that of an apocalypse and write that

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20. One of my colleagues made a suggestion: this series should have been opened with a volume that explained the methods used in modern biblical studies, provided some historical insight into the reception of critical study of the Bible among other Christian faiths, and delineated and then analyzed the options for integrating Restoration insights with those of the rest of the academy.

21. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 4–27, 44–49. The citation to Beale in this section of Draper and Rhodes is erroneously given as p. 58.

22. Ironically, Draper and Rhodes work within the eclectic approach themselves. Although they explain their approach as modified futurist with some idealist, in reality they use all four approaches. In particular, their dispensational reading of the seal septet is an example of the historicist approach.

“very few scholars disagree that Revelation is an apocalypse.”<sup>23</sup> This is true but incomplete: one of the few things upon which almost every interpreter agrees is that Revelation’s genre is mixed—that is, it is best described as containing generic elements from the apocalyptic, epistolary, and prophetic genres.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the salutations associated with letter writing are clear (e.g., 1:4; 22:21), and Revelation identifies itself as prophecy (e.g., 1:3; 22:19). The significance of this is debated, but at least one important point arises from it: While most apocalypses are pseudonymous, Revelation is not. This may be, as Delbert Burkett writes, because Revelation is also prophecy and prophets usually spoke in their own voices rather than as ancient figures from the past.<sup>25</sup>

The sections in this commentary on style and theology are likewise lacking in comparison with modern works. Draper and Rhodes present their remarks on style through a very close paraphrase of Beckwith’s 1919 commentary on Revelation,<sup>26</sup> which includes only selected elements of repetition, expansions, interruptions, prefaces, and nonrealism. Given the age of this treatment, its selectivity and brevity, and the amount of work that has been done with literary criticism in the last ninety-five years, it is unfortunate that the authors did not update this section. The only attention given to a systematic presentation of theology is a close paraphrase of Mounce’s thirty-five-year-old description of the apocalyptic genre covering dualism, futuristic eschatology, and rigid determinism. In academic commentaries one typically finds some mix of Christology, theology (doctrine of God), eschatology, and perhaps pneumatology. Theological topics of special interest to readers of

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23. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 2141n40.

24. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 37; and in introductory textbooks such as Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 512. Johnson’s chapter on Revelation contains a particularly insightful discussion of the ways in which John’s experience of the risen Christ transformed the apocalyptic genre into a powerful witness of Christian hopes.

25. Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity* (New York: Cambridge, 2002), 503.

26. Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John: Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 241–48.

Revelation might include a coherent theodicy, liturgical insights, and the virtues required of the saints. As these topics are well covered in the sources used by Draper and Rhodes, it is unfortunate that they did not also elect to paraphrase enough of them to give their readers a sample of these insights.

Although the sections on genre, style, and theology are dated and incomplete, Draper and Rhodes have completely failed to provide a coherent account of the literary structure. In commentaries a literary structure usually looks like an outline, supported by analysis. The value of such a feature is that readers can see how an author understands the logical organization of the biblical text. John's narrative logic is complicated by his extraordinary use of repetition, particularly in a form known as recapitulation.<sup>27</sup> A text that repeatedly narrates the same experience is said to recapitulate that particular event. Thus, recapitulation helps define the relationship between the events of an experience and the text that narrates that experience. In Revelation, the most basic issue of recapitulation is the relationship of the seal, trumpet, and bowl septets. Are readers to understand that there will be twenty-one messianic trials? Or will there be seven, each narrated three times by John? What about the so-called unnumbered visions in chapters 12–14? Do they somehow recapitulate the septets, or are they distinct? Decisions about recapitulation simply cannot be avoided.<sup>28</sup> And to be sure, Draper and Rhodes do talk about repetition at the level of plot, without calling it recapitulation, but their remarks are piecemeal, scattered throughout the body of the commentary rather than in the introduction, and do not add up to a coherent explanation, let alone a presentation that would signal the importance of the topic to an unfamiliar reader. An adequate

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27. In fact, Revelation is so complicated that no single presentation of the structure can capture its intricacies, but that makes an explanation and presentation of the issue all the more important.

28. For example, G. K. Beale's 2005 commentary is organized around a reading that finds five recapitulated sections, mirroring Daniel's five synonymously parallel visions (Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10–12).

academic commentary on Revelation requires a presentation of structure and an explanation of how the author understands recapitulation.

Perhaps the most surprising element of the introductory section, however, is the discussion of authorship. Draper and Rhodes are adamant that the author of Revelation was the disciple of Jesus identified in the synoptic Gospels as John. Like most of the discussion about authorship in the New Testament, arguments may be made in either direction. Their argument, however, is deeply flawed and, in addition, unnecessarily complicated by fragments of three separate arguments twisted together somewhat randomly: (1) the traditional one using internal and external evidence, (2) an argument created by comparing Revelation to the Fourth Gospel, and (3) a discussion probably intended to defend Revelation's place in the canon.<sup>29</sup>

In good academic commentaries, the evidence regarding authorship is traditionally split into internal and external evidence. Internal evidence reports what the text itself has to say about the author: his name was John, he was on Patmos, he was a Christian prophet (22:9), he never identifies himself as an apostle or eyewitness of Jesus, and he writes about the Twelve as if they were honored figures of the past rather than a group in which he counts himself (21:14).<sup>30</sup> External evidence comes from sources outside of Revelation, usually from the writings of the church fathers. Many of these sources, though not all, do indicate that John of Patmos was the named disciple of Jesus. How do Draper and Rhodes handle this argument? They simply fail to mention most of the evidence, internal or external, that does not support their case for John the apostle as the author of Revelation. This is not some esoteric point from biblical studies but a straightforward violation of the basics

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29. To see how good arguments regarding authorship are made, consult any introductory New Testament textbook. For reasonable arguments in favor of traditional authorship, see introductory textbooks from the evangelical publishing houses.

30. If, as Draper and Rhodes indicate, the language, forms, and images of Revelation are those dictated by God, it is especially telling that no mention is made of any special apostolic status for John.

of good, logical argumentation. When making an argument, credible writers acknowledge and deal with contrary evidence.

Questions regarding the authorship of Revelation are somewhat complicated by its association with other New Testament works attributed to John. Typically, commentaries consider this issue by pointing out the ways in which the ideas, language, and grammar of Revelation cohere with, or diverge from, those of the settled Johannine corpus. Draper and Rhodes attempt to establish that John the apostle wrote Revelation by pointing out similarities between Revelation and the Fourth Gospel.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, they neglect to first establish that John the apostle wrote the Fourth Gospel, so this approach is futile.<sup>32</sup> In addition, their presentation of the evidence is once again incomplete. For example, they remark on certain limited elements of christological similarity but omit mention of soteriology and eschatology—and it is eschatology that tends to present the strongest case against common authorship.

A third argument woven into this section seems to be aimed at defending the place of Revelation in the canon. Discussing canonicity is common in commentaries on Revelation because its inclusion was secured later than that of other works. The matter was settled quite a number of centuries ago, however, so no *argument* is actually needed. Once again, however, some of the points offered by Draper and Rhodes to support the inclusion of Revelation are flawed. For example, they write that Revelation was accepted by early Christians because it “showed Jesus in a new light, thus rounding out [the early Christian] understanding of him found in the Gospels and other writing.”<sup>33</sup> This assertion has no supporting citation at all. It is, in fact, an instance

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31. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 831.

32. In most academic commentaries the correspondence between Revelation and the rest of the Johannine corpus is attributed to different authors who were both part of an interpretive community centered on the insights of the character known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and thought to be an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus but not one of the Twelve.

33. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 854.

of presentism—that is, a logical fallacy in historical reasoning that assumes that people in earlier historical contexts thought as modern readers might.

The shortcomings of this introductory section are too significant to consider it useful as an academic reference work. Topics that are covered are generally dated and sometimes incomplete. Recapitulation and structure are completely missing. The presentation of authorship is, in particular, deeply flawed and makes claims in only one direction: it openly distorts the historical and textual record to assert unequivocally that the author of Revelation was John the apostle. The impetus for this warped demonstration probably lies with the assumption of inerrancy, as well as the priority given to the LDS tradition in situations where it diverges from other sources. In fact, Draper and Rhodes write, “So where do Latter-day Saints stand on the issue of authorship? We have scriptural insights that resolve the problem,” and then they quote the Book of Mormon scripture 1 Nephi 14:20, 22, identifying the author of Revelation as “the apostle of the Lamb” named John.<sup>34</sup>

However, in the absence of insight into how to read the textual and historical record in such a fashion as to conclude with the LDS tradition that the author of Revelation was unequivocally John the apostle, the matter cannot be considered resolved. No doubt, Latter-day Saints will continue to take a variety of positions on the authorship of Revelation, depending on how they weigh the evidence and the LDS tradition. In the larger spiritual sense, the authorship of Revelation is ultimately minor. However, in the immediate academic context it must be clear that bad scholarship is not faithful scholarship regardless of how closely the conclusions cohere with the LDS tradition. Evidence from the New Testament and early Christianity must be handled with integrity so that arguments can stand the test of critical exegesis and historical investigation. To do otherwise risks bringing the wider LDS tradition of the Restoration into disrepute precisely among those who value truth.

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34. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 896.

*Detailed exegesis*

The heart of a good commentary lies in the reliable presentation of interpretive options and analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. Some academic commentaries may attempt to be exhaustive in posing exegetical options; less ambitious enterprises survey the choices and present some sort of a representative range for their readers, along with citations into more detailed sources. Commentaries that portray themselves as presenting historical readings, as does this one, must then ground their arguments in first-century history, language, and culture if they wish to claim that they have some insight into what John and his earliest audiences might have understood. Thus, readers should expect to find a range of interpretive options explicitly mentioned in association with each pericope. The most salient of these should be analyzed by the authors for their suitability as first-century readings; their preferred choice may be mentioned, or they may opt to indicate that no decision can be made.

The bulk of the exegetical work in this commentary on Revelation is in the Translation, Notes, and Comments sections associated with each pericope. When the historical-critical reading of these passages is well aligned with the LDS tradition, Draper and Rhodes are content to follow the insights of others. Thus, readers of this commentary are often well served by the discernment that the authors of modern commentaries, monographs, and articles—such as David E. Aune, G. K. Beale, Adela Yarbro Collins, Leonard L. Thompson, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Richard J. Bauckham—bring to the task of reading Revelation. However, it must also be noted that most of the exegetical work has been left to these authors—very little interpretation actually comes from Draper and Rhodes until the scholarly analysis departs from the LDS tradition. The exegesis of three pericopes—celestial combat (Revelation 12:7–12), the great whore (chapter 17), and the sealing of the servants of God (7:1–4)—illustrates how the shift to the work of Draper and Rhodes generally plays out in much of the detailed exegesis.

Chapter 12 opens a new section in John's vision, one studded with astral imagery. The woman clothed in the sun, standing on the moon, and crowned with stars is menaced by a great red dragon who wishes to

destroy the child she is about to deliver. When the dragon's intentions are frustrated by the ascension of the child, John says that war broke out in heaven. Draper and Rhodes agree with the academic consensus that the woman and the child who is snatched up into heaven are associated with events of the first century.<sup>35</sup> However, where most scholars understand the war in heaven to be likewise associated with that era, Draper and Rhodes opt for a reading in which the celestial combat scene in Revelation 12 is said to have taken place before the creation of the earth, in the premortal existence.

If this reading were supported by arguments from the text, the departure from scholarly consensus would be unremarkable. Unfortunately, Draper and Rhodes do not alert their readers to readings other than their own, nor do they present any textual evidence to support the required temporal shift in narrative time. Thus, the celestial combat pericope is declared, without other interpretive options or argument, to be a sudden shift in "scenes flashing back to the pre-mortal period."<sup>36</sup> Nothing in the text itself indicates such a change, and some aspects contradict it. For example, John writes that at the conclusion of the combat scene Satan and his angels have been defeated and exiled to the earth. The saints are said to have "conquered [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death" (12:11 NRSV), which certainly sounds like martyrdom among early Christians. Draper and Rhodes respond to this by asserting that "this negative phrase can be recast to say, they persevered in their testimony and witnessing of Christ in spite of the fact that their spiritual lives were at stake"; however, they do not explain how John's use of *life* and *death* can be stretched to cover the deathless existence of the premortal realm in the LDS tradition.<sup>37</sup> In the end, Draper and

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35. Most scholars probably consider the man-child to be Christ and the ascension scene to be his resurrection and return to the Father. Draper and Rhodes opt for the man-child as a symbol of "a real political kingdom that the Lord attempted to establish during his and the apostles' early ministry" (Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 11284). Both readings are part of the first century of the Common Era.

36. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 11475.

37. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 11603.

Rhodes admit that “just how these faithful spirits [in the premortal sphere] were in danger of death is unknown.”<sup>38</sup> No such explanation is needed, however, if those who “did not cling to life even in the face of death” (12:11 NRSV) are the early Christian martyrs.

The significance of this pericope in John’s theological presentation is not minor: it teaches an inaugurated eschatology in which God has already won the decisive victory with the death and resurrection of Christ. Satan, however, still moves freely on earth, and the saints conquer by their faithful witness to the death, if necessary. Draper and Rhodes have suppressed the most likely reading of John’s understanding, probably through assumption of unity of scripture and their prioritization of the LDS tradition, which places a war in heaven in the premortal existence. A better way to handle the matter would have been to indicate the temporal distinction between the two versions but to note that the theological potential is relatively unchanged regardless of when the battle is thought to have occurred.

The most lurid figure in Revelation is probably that of a female character known as the whore. According to John, she is a prostitute with whom the world’s leaders fornicate daily (17:2), she persecutes the saints (17:6), she is seated on seven hills (17:7, 9), and she is “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (17:18 NRSV). Although formally titled as “Babylon,” it takes significant effort to escape the impression that the reality behind the symbol is Rome. Draper and Rhodes, however, first write that the whore is to be identified with two historical realities. As a whore and mother of whores she is “the philosophies and false theologies that have seduced, bound, and blinded humankind from the beginning. As Babylon, she represents secular society, that is, the society that results from the implementation of the philosophy” that the whore promotes.<sup>39</sup> They expound on various nuances of these two ideas at some length and then, finally, in their exegesis of 17:18, they provide the key interpretive options: “there are three primary interpretations for this imagery [of the whore]. Many see her as ancient Rome. Others see

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38. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 11608.

39. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 16339.

her as an apostate Jerusalem. The best context, however, suggests she represents Satan's transtemporal religio-economic combination."<sup>40</sup> Although in this instance other options are presented, once again Draper and Rhodes assert their preferred reading without argument.

A better way to handle the matter requires a candid encounter with the textual evidence. If John thought of the whore as a "transtemporal religio-economic combination" rather than the city of Rome, founded on seven hills, he certainly failed to make that point very clearly.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Draper and Rhodes have created something of a false dichotomy that distorts Revelation's narrative. John's earliest audiences would have clearly understood Rome as the reality behind the whore but would also have appreciated that the city was, at heart, a false religious and economic system working in opposition to God. Here the usefulness of eclectic readings is seen: the preterist approach preserves John's identification of Rome as the basis of the imagery, idealist readings find echoes of Rome's depravity in the oppressive systems that have continually degraded human life and godly spiritual values, and advocates of futurist approaches anticipate the appearance of a final Rome/Babylon entity.

A third example revolves around the treatment of the priestly reign of the saints. According to John, Christ has made the saints "to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father" (Revelation 1:6 NRSV). John's description of the saints in Revelation suggests that their priestly reign is modeled after Christ's. Just as Christ provided sacred service to God by restoring the relationship between God and humans, so also the saints may participate in a sacral role as suffering witnesses of Christ. Likewise, just as Christ came into his kingdom by conquering sin and death, so too the saints come into their reign by remaining faithful to death—they "overcome" or "conquer" as each of the seven letters

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40. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 16891.

41. An indication of cross-reading between Revelation and 1 Nephi is the word *combination* as a description of a secretive organization with evil intentions. It does not so occur in Revelation.

indicates.<sup>42</sup> According to John, this relationship with God follows from the love of Christ as expressed in his death and resurrection and is thus open to all (1:5). Draper and Rhodes, however, make no mention of these concepts in favor of reading ideas taken from the LDS tradition into Revelation. Thus, they indicate that “the Savior’s followers hold not only ecclesiastical authority but also civil and, therefore, will preside over both the religious and political orders of heaven. In doing so, they hold the fullness of priesthood power, all that a man can have in mortality . . . these offices [of king and priest; queen and priestess] are bestowed only to those individuals who have participated in all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and thereby, have been sealed into eternal life.”<sup>43</sup> Although some of this coheres with John’s ideas, concepts such as “ecclesiastical authority,” temples as the Latter-day Saints understand them, and gender and marital requirements are significant expansions of John’s far simpler presentation.

This conflation of LDS ideas with John’s text presents some challenges in the authors’ reading of the sealing of the servants of God in Revelation 7:1–4. Four angels, given authority to damage the earth with wind, are called upon by a fifth to restrain themselves “until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads” (7:1–3 NRSV). In this case, those so marked are said by John to be protected from the predations of the locust warriors (9:4); some think they are also protected spiritually. According to Draper and Rhodes, those so sealed are not simply the servants of God as John describes them, but the kings and priests of modern LDS tradition.<sup>44</sup> Draper and Rhodes are willing to allow that the spouses of these men will be included and

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42. Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 79. Although debate continues about what John intended to convey by calling the saints “a kingdom, priests,” a personal, ministerial priesthood as modern Christians understand such ideas is less likely.

43. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 2869.

44. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 7715. In connection with this section, Draper and Rhodes note the parallel with Ezekiel 9:4–6. Their explanation needs to be corrected to indicate that the sealing was *watched* by Ezekiel, not done by him (Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 7616).

so protected.<sup>45</sup> One hopes so; indeed, a man who accepted this security before his wife was similarly guarded would not be much of a husband. However, by implication, this reading leaves unprotected any number of otherwise presumably faithful people, including minor children and the unmarried. Those outside of the most exclusive LDS notions of a nuclear family remain without safeguards. John's text, however, indicates that God will protect all his servants.

I bring up this complication not to assert that there is no way to resolve it but to suggest that expansions on biblical texts do not necessarily illuminate the insights of their authors nor do they inevitably make difficult points easier to understand. A better way to handle such situations is to clearly distinguish between what John said and the associated expansions in the LDS tradition. Such an approach would allow readers to see for themselves both what John understood and how the LDS tradition re-images the interaction between God and his people for modern relationships and communities.

Where the historical-critical reading coheres with the LDS tradition, readers of this commentary are generally exposed to the best of modern scholarship on Revelation. Where it diverges, however, John's ideas are too often suppressed, distorted, or expanded to promote ideas from the LDS tradition. Somewhat ironically, Draper and Rhodes are aware that the LDS interpretive tradition cannot always be casually identified with the most obvious readings of the text. In the preface, they write, "It can be seen that Joseph Smith appealed to the writings of John as both proof texts and points of expansion as he taught the Saints the doctrines of the kingdom."<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Joseph Smith did pour new wine into old bottles. And this, I think, is entirely appropriate in a community, such as that of the Latter-day Saints, in which the canon is open and the prophetic voice is prominent, authoritative, and personal. That said, however, biblical exegetes within such a community are not free to ignore or manipulate the textual evidence in ways that do not reflect good scholarship regardless of how thoroughly the readings so

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45. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 7708.

46. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 1679.

constructed cohere with elements of the LDS tradition. Forcing Revelation into a procrustean bed created by the LDS tradition provides poor service to both the LDS community and the Bible.

## Homiletic commentaries and personal reflection

Homiletic commentaries are built upon exegetical commentaries, but their focus is on teaching and preaching the text to a modern audience of laypersons in order to promote a desirable change of viewpoint or behavior. The purpose of these homiletic sections is to give modern readers a sense of how the passage just analyzed might apply to them—a point that may well be lost in the historical-critical detail. Their challenge is threefold: they must be immediately relevant; this relevance must be lasting, or else they quickly become dated; and they must demonstrate good pastoral judgment in describing and motivating the desired changes. By contrast, commentaries created as an exercise in personal reflection are rarely part of the academy. Their content and form can be variable and idiosyncratic; their tone tends to be devotional and their coverage is often incomplete. Unless they are the work of a person who has had a profound, rigorous, and prolonged experience with a text, they tend to be of little interest outside of whatever niche the author occupies.

Most of the homiletic content and personal reflection in the present volume is limited to the analysis sections and the chapter conclusions. Overall, the homiletic and meditational elements seem extremely long, repetitious, and less than insightful. Unfortunately, however, some of the points made by Draper and Rhodes are rather surprising and unique—in an unpleasant way. The examples that follow are evidence of flawed analysis and reflection ranging from the unserious to a grave lack of judgment.

### *Pergamum*

Writing about the problems with assimilation in Pergamum, John wants his followers to know that their participation in the pagan festivals, which

featured meat sacrificed to idols, is unacceptable. For the Christians of Pergamum, this was a serious challenge because of the commercial, professional, and personal relationships that such participation fostered—to follow John’s advice was to risk financial ruin, professional disrepute, and ostracism. To make this meaningful to their modern LDS readers, then, Draper and Rhodes write, “These [festivals], however, were immoral by any standard and, therefore, not conducive to the Holy Spirit (*like Latter-day Saints justifying themselves in going to a sports bar today because they do not have cable*).”<sup>47</sup> In a world in which the persecution of religious minorities is rising, and in light of the LDS experience with religious bigotry that created, and still creates, social, economic, and professional barriers, patronizing sports bars in order to watch cable TV seems a juvenile illustration of the difficulties of avoiding unwanted assimilation.

#### *Authority in the seven churches*

A second questionable element, this time found in the conclusion to the chapters on the letters to the seven churches, addresses what Draper and Rhodes find to be of “greatest concern” in Revelation, the question of authority, that is, the “right to preside over and to define the doctrine of the Church.”<sup>48</sup> Regarding those who challenged John, they write:

Spurning authority, despising truth, loving error and the glory of men, these hell-inspired antichrists, like spiders, carefully spun their web of half-truths, counterfeit ordinances, and false doctrines. Luring and trapping a people no longer willing to follow living prophets and becoming ever more devoid of the Spirit, these spinners of heresy were able to suck out the juice of these Christians’ spiritual lives.<sup>49</sup>

This is not the language or discernment of academic discourse; indeed, it may not be appropriate for the pulpit, either. One wonders what purpose such a melodramatic diatribe, leveled against people now dead

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47. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 4189.

48. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 5284.

49. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 5298.

almost two thousand years, might have. Issues of authority are sensitive matters, now as always, and good, modern insights delivered in sober, reflective language would have been more useful.

### *Trumpet septet*

Revelation 9 records the events associated with the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets. According to John, one-third of the inhabitants of the earth were killed by the devastation so unleashed, and readers of Revelation are often surprised when John indicates that the rest of humanity refused to repent. Draper and Rhodes address this situation by writing:

*The Lord is perfectly prepared to allow thousands to die in order to protect his people. Some may have trouble with this idea, but the Seer has a very realistic understanding about death. From John's perspective, all must die. The question is when and how. Ultimate destiny is not determined by the moment or manner of death; it is by the manner of life. Those who are destroyed are not annihilated. They have further existence. But for the present they have not been playing by God's rules. They have become mean, and so they are thrown into the penalty box, so to speak, for unnecessary roughness while the game goes on.<sup>50</sup>*

If, in fact, God is “perfectly prepared to allow thousands to die in order to protect his people,” Draper and Rhodes will need to provide a citation from Revelation or otherwise make such an argument. According to John, many of the saints do die or go into captivity (Revelation 13:10); most scholars find the violence in Revelation to be excessive and without adequate justification as these things are now analyzed. In addition, the cold-hearted superficiality that turns religious persecution into meanness and deaths into penalties in an ice hockey game is trivializing and inappropriate. This is not the product of scholarly analysis, nor is it the language of sound pastoral judgment.

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50. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 9415.

More important, however, this suggests that Draper and Rhodes do not really understand the thrust of the *entire* trumpet septet, which is most definitely not on how God kills people, but on how he saves them. Briefly, the first six trumpets sound. As Draper and Rhodes report, many people are killed but no one repents. But, this is not the end of the matter. To motivate change, God tries a different approach—the suffering testimony of the church, symbolized by the two witnesses.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, the witnesses seal their testimonies in blood, but when the judgment of God inevitably falls, the sentence is moderated. Reversing the pattern of divine judgment described by Isaiah and Amos, who wrote that nine-tenths would die, John reports that only one-tenth were destroyed while nine-tenths react to the resurrection of the witnesses by being terrified and then finally giving glory to God, exactly as did the inhabitants of heaven in chapters 4 and 5.<sup>52</sup> Thus, before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, “the witness, death, and vindication of the community of faith accomplish what the prospect of judgment alone does not do. It brings people of many tribes, languages, and nations to fear God and give him glory.”<sup>53</sup> The focus of God, and John, is on life, not death, although the depth of the remaining violence is without suitable justification for modern sensibilities.<sup>54</sup>

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51. These witnesses are described as two olive trees and two lampstands (Revelation 11:4). Since the symbol behind the seven churches is a lampstand in chapters 2 and 3, it is likely the same thing here. The LDS tradition, however, suggests that two individuals are intended. For this reading, the distinction is not significant.

52. The reference is to Isaiah 6:13 and Amos 5:3. John’s numbers also reverse Elijah’s situation: in Elijah’s case, only seven thousand were left, while John writes that “only” seven thousand died.

53. Koester, *Revelation*, 111. The entire argument presented here regarding the trumpet septet is his.

54. Draper and Rhodes make another unsettling assertion in this section. When writing concerning the one-tenth who die, they say, “one-tenth, or a tithe, is the Lord’s portion, that which he demands. In this case, it is the lives of his enemies” (Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 10589). I am not convinced that God tithes evil, and the idea that he takes human life as a tithe is very disturbing.

*The two witnesses*

In chapter 11, John describes the work of the two witnesses, who testify in Jerusalem for a period of time before they are killed by the beast. Draper and Rhodes analyze the death of the two witnesses by writing:

The text suggests that it takes the beast some time to realize exactly who he is up against, but when he does, he will then direct his forces to move specifically against the two prophets. And he will win, *perhaps with help from certain rebellious Jews*.<sup>55</sup>

This paragraph is without citation or argument. In particular, the insinuation of Jewish malfeasance is not supported by Revelation and is found in neither the LDS nor the academic tradition. It does, however, appear in Draper's earlier book, *Opening the Seven Seals*. There he writes that the Jewish perfidy "is suggested through the association of [the death of the two witnesses] with that of the Lord, killed by his own people."<sup>56</sup> If Draper and Rhodes are following *Seven Seals*, they are arguing that since Jews betrayed Jesus, Jews will betray the two witnesses. The disturbing hostility toward Jews displayed here probably arises out of an inadequate understanding of the relationship between Jews, Christians, and God. Indeed, Draper and Rhodes write that "through the teachings of the synagogue of Satan, the rulers of the Jews found reason to reject and kill the Lord. In the process they caused their people *to lose the priesthood and their position as God's chosen people*."<sup>57</sup> Most Christian churches are very careful about this point for obvious reasons, and one does not often find college professors arrogating to themselves the sensitive leadership role of assessing the covenant status of the Jews.<sup>58</sup> To do

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55. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 10493.

56. Draper, *Seven Seals*, 122.

57. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 12694. The expression "synagogue of Satan" is anachronistic in discussions of the crucifixion since it comes from Revelation and reflects the polemical attitudes of the late first century. Kindness suggests such an offensive epithet not be used at all.

58. On a subject this sensitive, it may make no difference that Draper and Rhodes have, in the foreword, declared that the opinions in this commentary are their own and

so without citation, as Draper and Rhodes do, is not prudent. To suggest that Jews will betray the two witnesses without textual justification for the reading is simply unacceptable.

### *Fall of Babylon*

A final instance of questionable analysis centers on what Draper and Rhodes have to say about the fall of Babylon in chapter 17. They equate this symbolic action with a future breakdown of civil society and wish to warn their readers that modern, urban societies pose new threats:

And how will the earth dwellers react to this? Before, when downturns came, many people lived on the land and could, therefore, eke out a living. But that is not the case today. Many dwell in huge megalopolises and must rely totally on the local stores for their goods. But what happens when there are none? In addition, what happens when the restraining forces of society can no longer operate? What happens when *untamed and unholy people are left to run free*? Riots and looting have happened in the best of times. What will happen in the worst?<sup>59</sup>

At this point, the personal reflections recorded here seem to have degenerated into an idiosyncratic, skewed understanding of twenty-first-century urban life that appears to be on a rapid slide into a B-list apocalyptic drama. Two points stand out as particularly unsuitable. The first is a transparent attempt to play on fears of class violence in a crisis, a very unprincipled use of the Bible. Second, note the descriptors attached to urban citizens: they are “untamed and unholy” and when “left to run free” there is danger. *Untamed* is appropriately used of animals, not people, and *unholy* is a judgment the authors are in no position to make. In the hands of a person so inclined—and there are many—these negative stereotypes and unfounded judgments are ready evidence of bigotry.<sup>60</sup>

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do not reflect those of BYU or the LDS Church.

59. Draper and Rhodes, *Revelation of John*, 17480.

60. A similarly questionable bit of advice is rendered when discussing John’s instructions to the saints indicating that they must endure with patience the trials of their

The merit of homiletic content and personal reflection is very often a matter of taste, and the greatest possible latitude should be offered. However, some ideas, such as those presented in this review, lie outside the bounds of academic discourse, appropriate sensitivity, and sound pastoral judgment. Moreover, by virtue of the fact that the series advertises itself as the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series, the institution is now, to some degree, associated with these unfortunate ideas. And because the lead time to produce a major commentary is often measured in decades, this volume will bear the BYU appellation for some time to come. This makes it all the more fortunate that no publisher has been found for printed copies; since this volume exists only in electronic form, it can more easily be edited for professional, academic quality.

## Conclusions

The purpose of the BYUNTC series is to provide “a responsible, carefully researched, multi-volume commentary” that “will combine the best of ancient linguistic and historical scholarship with Latter-day Saint doctrinal perspectives.” The authors of this particular volume set out to “bring John’s writing into its fullest light” by providing a new translation, a verse-by-verse exegetical commentary, and associated analysis. This, then, is the crux: does the way Draper and Rhodes have chosen to integrate historical-critical insights with the LDS tradition really “bring John’s writing into its fullest light”? This review has pointed out that their effort is not entirely satisfactory. The LDS tradition offered excludes women and lacks needed historical context, two hallmarks of a well-developed appreciation for biblical reception. The introductory

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time. Draper and Rhodes write, “The saints are duty bound to uphold and sustain the State, but only to a point. Should the State overstep its bounds and become a quasi-religious institution demanding reverence and worship from its citizens, then the Saint [*sic*] must not only resist but also be willing to pay the cost of that resistance” (12612). This should be clarified to preclude any suggestion of sedition, violence, or other illegal behaviors, which would be inappropriate in a commentary.

section is dated, incomplete, and deeply flawed by a slanted presentation where evidence runs against the LDS tradition. The rendition and the authors' reading of John's narrative are similarly distorted at certain points under pressure from the twin assumptions of unity of scripture and inerrancy, and the priority Draper and Rhodes assign to the LDS tradition. Finally, the homiletic content, while mostly unremarkable, deviates on far too many occasions from an appropriate academic voice, sensitivity to others, and sound pastoral judgment. This commentary is not the way forward.

Although I am not privy to the details of the review process, the flaws of the present work indicate that this part of the publication trajectory requires more consideration than it has heretofore received. The issues identified in this review are not minor or simply mechanical.<sup>61</sup> Instead, they indicate that the authors do not really control all the appropriate methodologies and that they lack the necessary commitment to handle contrary evidence reliably. The poor judgment displayed in elements of the homiletic and reflective contributions is of particular concern; indeed, I cannot help but wonder if any peer review was enforced by the editors. Future volumes will need a more robust internal critique, as well as the participation of scholars outside of the BYU system, in order to preclude the appearance created by this volume that a narrow orthodoxy has displaced genuine scholarship and its associated integrity.

Finally, faithful scholarship is more than good scholarship. Bad scholarship, however, is never faithful scholarship regardless of the "results" so achieved. Exegetes working from within the LDS community must handle textual and historical evidence with respect. Where this evidence diverges from the LDS tradition, integrity requires that the distinctions be noted with sensitivity to both the LDS tradition and the advantages and limits of scholarly insight. There is room for a both/and approach in which ancient and modern prophets are brought

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61. There are, however, far too many minor errors as well. I quit counting after one hundred instances of incorrect spelling, subject-verb disagreement, inappropriate punctuation, homophones, and the like. Of particular significance for a biblical commentary is that Cain's brother was not Able, a mistake that occurs at least twice.

together in interpretive readings that demonstrate congruence without demanding identity. To discern this, rather than to distort or suppress the historical-critical, is the way forward for LDS exegetes.

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