

Brief Notices

Ancient American Inscriptions: Plow Marks or History?
by William R. McGlone and others
(Early Sites Research Society, 1993)

The authors of this book have been actively studying for a decade and a half the apparent inscriptions throughout North America claimed by some (notably Barry Fell; see *BYU Studies* 17 [Spring 1977]: 373-75) to be in pre-Columbian scripts and languages from Europe and Africa. This "American epigraphy" and resulting purported decipherments have been condemned as fraudulent or ignorantly self-deceptive by conventional archaeologists. However, these archaeologists have not put forth serious effort to research the material firsthand.

These five authors (scientists in fields other than archaeology) have produced a genuinely critical book about American epigraphy as a basis for reliable investigation to replace past name-calling. They summarize what is known about scores of purported inscriptions, point out weaknesses in the arguments of the proponents, and make clear how baseless are many of the counterclaims of establishment experts. Despite serious problems they see with the evidence, they conclude it "is sufficiently strong to justify formal evalua-

tion . . . by conventional scholarship" (339). To that end, they make systematic, operational suggestions about methods for further study that could break the impasse.

Chapter 12 may be of particular interest to Utahns since it discusses an inscription panel from Rochester Creek in central Utah which includes "Egyptian"-looking elements. (The second of the authors is a Utahn but not a Mormon.)

—John L. Sorenson

The Quality of Mercy
by Eugene England (Bookcraft, 1992)

If there exists one quality at once capable of both bringing about world peace and enhancing individual spirituality, that quality is surely mercy, which England equates to charity. England's book is a collection of twelve personal essays on mercy tied together by the author's commentary every three chapters. The essays explore many facets of mercy, including the dichotomy between mercy and justice and Christ as our model of mercy.

In one essay, England challenges us to end world hunger by the year 2000, calling that goal our "primary human task" (120). He makes "two simple, if rather dramatic, proposals" for fulfilling this