

## Brief Notices

*New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ: A Guide for Acts through Revelation*, by D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner (Deseret Book, 1998)

“You can often tell a book by its cover” is a modified adage we librarians have followed for decades. But it is apparently also true for artists, one of whom saw me with Ogden and Skinner’s book in hand. Her comment was, “That must be a fine book if it uses Caravaggio’s inspired painting *Supper at Emmaus* as the cover art.” Indeed, the scene, which depicts the Savior breaking bread with one of the Apostles, likewise beckons us to partake of the Bread of Life offered by the Apostles of the meridian of time.

Having taught an occasional New Testament class for the past twenty-five years, I have been acutely aware of student interest not only in the doctrines taught by Jesus Christ and the early Apostles but also in the cultural, historical, and linguistic milieu of the Gospels and Epistles. Unfortunately, the sources for this information have been so diversified and obscure that to use them in an undergraduate or Gospel Doctrine course would have required not only substantial additional time but also a scholarly discernment beyond that of most instructors. In *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ*, Ogden and Skinner very nicely fill the need for a concise and readable commentary. The volume gathers appropriate photographs, maps, charts, diagrams, and commentary while describing the history and geography of the New Testament world.

The authors are well prepared to enlighten Latter-day Saints with this timely handbook. Both are professors of ancient scripture at BYU, and both have experienced long-term residence and teaching in the Holy Land, as well as extensive

travel and study in the lands of the early Apostles—Turkey, Greece, and Italy. Their insights and information about early leaders and the ancient Saints are often very poignant and meaningful. Throughout the volume, the doctrines of the Restoration are discussed in context. Special minichapters are set aside for more lengthy discussions—baptism for the dead, the use of consecrated olive oil in priesthood blessings, gnosticism, and dealing with trials, suffering, and afflictions. Just as significantly, a voice of harmony between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon strengthens both these discussions and the chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse commentaries.

Other unexpected but delightful complements to the main commentary include a section describing over twenty cities mentioned in the New Testament. For example, a brief history and geographical setting are given for the city of Corinth, along with a description of major archaeological remains. Finally, several excellent appendices compare the seven churches of Revelation, provide a commentary on Armageddon, and explain very lucidly the ten doctrines of salvation, including justification and the Second Comforter.

This book gathers together the best gospel understanding from both secular and LDS scholarship, including the work of Sidney B. Sperry, Richard L. Anderson, and Bruce R. McConkie. The secular sources are well known and well respected by many LDS scholars and include the Muratorian Canon, early church fathers, Josephus, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, classical writers such as Strabo and Pliny the Elder, Ginzberg’s *The Legends of the Jews*, the Talmud, the Anchor Bible Dictionary, and writings by many eminent non-LDS scholars.

This volume is a milestone publication. It will be a valuable addition to the library of any gospel teacher or student who wishes for a deeper understanding of the ancient Apostles, their teachings, and the world in which they lived.

—Gary P. Gillum

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*An Epistle from the New Testament Apostles*, arranged by John W. Welch (Bookcraft, 1999)

The Epistles in the New Testament contain some of the most important doctrinal teachings and most moving personal testimonies anywhere in scripture. Indeed, many of the doctrines of the Restoration have been taught using the words of Peter, Paul, and John. As *An Epistle from the New Testament Apostles* points out, the thirteen Articles of Faith are surprisingly rich in references to the Epistles of Paul.

In this volume, John Welch has created a unique and ingenious presentation of the New Testament Epistles with the hope that Latter-day Saints will be able to better understand these letters. The complete text of each of the twenty-one Epistles is divided into its literary and thematic units and then rearranged by themes to read like one grand epistle—a letter from the New Testament Apostles. The complete text of the King James Version of the Epistles is presented and marked in a way that readily shows the original biblical text together with the changes made by the Joseph Smith Translation. Included in slashes are alternate readings from ancient New Testament texts as well as alternative translations for Greek words that greatly enhance the reader's comprehension of the text.

Welch has organized his material around ten major themes with numerous subtopics. Thus a reader can pursue all of the material in the Epistles by such themes as atonement, faith and obedi-

ence, and Christian living. Of particular interest is the section containing biographical information and personal statements. Here the reader can find a rich collection of all of the personal expressions of Paul, Peter, and John to the ancient Saints. These declarations of testimony, concern, and affection for the Saints echo through the years and strike a responsive chord in Latter-day Saints.

For those who have had trouble understanding these Epistles in the past, this volume provides the easiest way ever to gain access to their contents. For those who are already conversant with the Epistles, reading them arranged by themes provides many new insights as the writings of the ancient Apostles are examined side by side.

—David R. Seely

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*The Testimony of John the Beloved: The 27th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, Brigham Young University, 1998 (Deseret Book, 1998)

The Gospel, the Epistles, and the Revelation of John the Beloved have given the Saints a unique perspective of Jesus Christ and his teachings. The preface of *The Testimony of John the Beloved* reminds us that this Apostle's writings contain "some of the most profound events, specific prophecies, and significant doctrines recorded in all of ancient scripture." This collection of twenty-one addresses from the 1998 Sidney B. Sperry symposium discusses many of these doctrinal teachings and John's testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

The diverse backgrounds of the participants of the symposium have resulted in gathering many inspired and inspiring insights and truths about this Gospel writer and his teachings. Topics discussed include John's Revelation and the restoration of the Gospel, the themes of discipleship in John, women in the writings