

Brief Notices

*Prophesying upon the Bones:
J. Reuben Clark and the Foreign
Debt Crisis, 1933-39*

by Gene A. Sessions (University of
Illinois Press, 1992)

During the 1920s, foreign governments tapped the U.S. capital markets by selling bonds to individual investors. However, as these governments encountered financial difficulties, they found it easy to forgo payments to the U.S. bondholders. Responding to the resulting outcry from the private investors, the U.S. government formed the Foreign Bondholders Protective Council in 1933. This quasi-governmental group was authorized to negotiate directly with foreign governments to seek redress for the bondholders. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., served as the president of the FBPC almost from its inception until he resigned in 1939.

Sessions describes this period as perhaps Clark's primary public service accomplishment. Focusing on the administrative structuring of the council, Sessions relates how Clark imbued it with his ideals of honesty, trust, commitment, and honor. During this same period, Clark was also serving in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sessions draws parallels between Clark's public policy and negotiating positions and his religious beliefs and values. Although the book lacks details about the actual negotiations, we learn that Clark was able to obtain relief from several countries. He was also successful in defending the council

from its public and private critics. *Prophesying upon the Bones* is weakest in its comparison of the 1930s bond defaults to the current developing country debt crisis. Sessions' attempts to "probe deeply into the mindset" of Clark are also subject to challenge. Nevertheless, the book provides insights into a little-known aspect of Clark's public career.

— Brent D. Wilson

*Toward Understanding
the New Testament*

by O. C. Tanner, Lewis M. Rogers,
and Sterling M. McMurrin (Signature
Books, 1990)

According to its preface, this book is intended to update O. C. Tanner's 1932 work on the New Testament for modern critical readers. In this attempt, it fails. There has been some effort to add references to more modern sources in the bibliography and in the footnotes, but these seldom influence the substance of the text. A few selections, but too few, show signs of recent work, but overall the patina of contemporary scholarship is just too thin to disguise the fact that this book is almost a century out of date.

On the one hand, the book is postrationalist in that it adopts a naturalistic methodology and assiduously avoids the "distortion" of religious belief, but on the other hand, the book is distinctly precritical. There is little or no discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus, of the Quest or New

Quest, of form criticism or other types of literary criticism, or of the importance to the New Testament of archeological and manuscript discoveries since the 1940s. And while there is a cursory discussion of the synoptic problem, the critical implications of that problem are totally ignored in the harmonized "life of Jesus" approach of the commentary. The footnotes lean heavily toward works written at or before midcentury, except where they have been added as an afterthought.

In short, for the most part this book is a museum piece of social gospel, ethical Jesus, turn-of-the-century rationalism. *Sic transit eruditio doctorum.*

— Stephen E. Robinson

*Mormon Redress Petitions:
Documents of the 1833-1838
Missouri Conflict*
edited by Clark V. Johnson
(Bookcraft, 1992)

Ultimately, persecution is personal. The causes may be institutional and the aftermath may blame faceless mobs, but in reality it's people persecuting people. The blows are thrown by flesh and blood, and the hits are losses taken at the most personal levels. No better (or worse) example of this can be found than in the Missouri persecution of the Latter-day Saints, and *Mormon Redress Petitions* assembles a massive collection of all known and existing personal petitions for redress submitted by early LDS Church leaders to the United States government after those atrocities ended in 1838.

Even though the Saints had purchased land, cultivated it into productive farms, and built homes, they were obliged to abandon their property or face certain death. While

imprisoned in a Missouri jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith instructed the Saints to compile written affidavits detailing their losses. These affidavits were organized into at least four separate petitions to the United States government, yet they produced no relief, nor could federal courts be persuaded to hear the case. This book gives a grassroots view of this episode in Mormon history, with statement after statement by the people who experienced these persecutions up close.

This documentation also dispels the notion that the Mormons were expelled from Missouri only because of social, political, and economic reasons, and shows that the dominate reason for Missourian hostility toward the Saints was religion. Account after account tells how the mobsters pressed the Saints to denounce their belief in the Book of Mormon and membership in the Church in exchange for promises of safety. Readers may inspect these original statements and personal narratives, and come to their own conclusions about what happened during this dramatic period in Church history.

— Boley T. Thomas

*Breaking the Cycle
of Compulsive Behavior*
by Martha Nibley Beck
and John C. Beck
(Deseret Book, 1990)

Written to Latter-day Saints who are addicted to compulsive behaviors and to their family members, this work presents a simple and refreshing new paradigm. It describes four steps of a "compulsive cycle" which can be replaced by opposing steps in a "joy cycle." The addictive cycle begins with feelings of isolation, followed by actions of