

Review Essay

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This issue of *BYU Studies* inaugurates what we hope will become an annual feature of the Book Review section—an article-length review essay. We think that it is appropriate that we occasionally devote to a special topic or problem an article-length review essay that goes beyond regular reviews. Such an essay can serve a variety of functions. It can introduce us more completely and critically to a problem or issue in the academic literature. It can survey a genre of scholarly literature, providing both analysis and evaluation of the major and pivotal works on a given topic. Or it can combine these approaches and further suggest what could or should be done.

It is fitting that our first Review Essay should address not only an aspect of the life of the founder of Mormonism, but also a topic of contemporary concern—how much is the *History of the Church* the journal of the President of the Church? The status and continued use of the *History of the Church* makes it essential that all those who use it be fully aware of its origins and development. While much remains to be done, Howard Searle provides us with a good overview of what we now know about the compilation of the *History*—what it is and what it is not. The several tables show graphically who wrote what and thus add to his presentation. He is well qualified to address this topic, as he recently completed his Ph.D. in history at U.C.L.A. by writing a dissertation on the history of historical writing in the Church before the Civil War, a study which is in the process of being prepared for publication.