

REVIEWS

A Stark Contrast

Duwayne R. Anderson, *Farewell to Eden: Coming to Terms with Mormonism and Science* (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2003), 348 pp., appendices, index

Reviewed by Thomas W. Murphy, chair of the Anthropology Department, Edmonds Community College, Lynnwood, Washington

Duwayne R. Anderson, a highly accomplished and acclaimed physicist specializing in fiber optics, offers readers a thorough examination of the role of science in his disillusionment from Mormonism. The book provides compelling evidence that Latter-day Saint scriptures and prophetic teachings fail to coincide with scientific findings in physics, astronomy, geology, biology, and archaeology. Anderson's extensive use of proof texts, while valuable as a reference to others struggling with conflicts between LDS teachings and science, is frequently ahistorical, lacking sufficient attention to the evolution, diversity, and nuances of Mormon thought.

His book begins with a self-reflective chapter examining the marginalization of a scientist in his family. He describes his mission to British Columbia, study of physics at BYU, marriage, Church leadership positions, the "cracks" that started to develop in his testimony after reading the Bible cover to cover, and his own marginalization as he compared LDS claims with the findings of science. It is followed by a detailed and accessible discussion of the assumptions, method, limitations, and possibilities of science. The next five chapters identify a litany of challenges to common Latter-day Saint beliefs from quantum mechanics, chaos theory, astronomy, geology, biology, and archaeology. The eighth chapter, perhaps one of the most interesting to social scientists, uses statistics from the U.S. Department of Education and National Science Foundation to soundly refute the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism's* claim that Utah had led the nation in the proportion of university graduates to earn a doctoral degree in science. The final chapter returns to personal reflections, concluding: "Joseph Smith was a storyteller of extraordinary talent and means, with a unique ability to observe ordinary things, and spin them into wondrous tales" (313). The book also includes four appendices, the most intriguing of which is a statistical analysis of month dates in the Book of Mormon illustrating that the scripture's author "had a tendency to pick days in the first week of the month" (336).

The book is filled with several arguments that many readers will find thought-provoking and challenging. Anderson provides a list of eight fundamen-

tal problems with a belief in a literal global flood, offers a refutation of intelligent design, identifies problems with the absolute and relative time scales of creation in the books of Moses and Abraham, questions the coherency and plausibility of a belief in a finite God, challenges Joseph Smith's placement of the Garden of Eden in Missouri, uses the text of the Book of Mormon to dismiss apologists' claims to have found an Arabian river of Lehi, and contends that chiasmic structures that are purported to be Hebraic underpinnings of some passages in the Book of Mormon are relatively common and "actually more consistent with the idea of a 19th century author who was familiar with the Bible, than with the story as described in the *Book of Mormon* itself" (282).

Anderson offers a formidable challenge to advocates of a limited geographic setting for the Book of Mormon in Central America. His approach is to examine the big picture, considering factors often ignored by scholars at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS). He contrasts events as depicted in Latter-day Saint scripture (including the Book of Abraham and Book of Moses) and the writings of Joseph Fielding Smith with those found in the archaeological record at approximately the same time. For example, he contends that the Mesoamerican Early Hunters Period (13,000 to 7,000 BCE) coincides with the expectation that "the Earth was near Kolob, Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, and there was no death in the world." In the archaeological record, the Late Formative (Pre-Classic) Period (300 BCE to 250 C.E.) was a time of social revolution, the building of cultural centers, and the rise of a class system rather than the utopian society portrayed after Jesus's visit in the Book of Mormon (255–56). The following summary illustrates more of the incongruence apparent in a macroperspective:

Ancient American archaeology spans a broader range of history than just that described in the *Book of Mormon*. It also spans such historical events in Mormon theology as the splitting of the continents, the Tower of Babel, and the universal Flood. As we have already seen from previous chapters, the universal flood and splitting of continents (just a few thousand years ago in LDS theology) are myth, and are not found at all in the geological record. This is further supported by the observation from archaeology that, during the time when Mormon doctrine tells us the world only spoke one language (prior to the Tower of Babel) there were many languages in the Americas alone. And during the time when Mormon doctrine tells us the world was submerged by a universal flood, the ancient Americans were going about their lives, completely unhindered by the destruction such an event would have caused, had it really occurred. And during the time Mormon doctrine says the Earth was all one land mass, the ancient Americans were living in isolation from the rest of the world, cut off by two great oceans; the Pacific and the Atlantic. (259)

While Anderson has provided much to occupy Latter-day Saint apologists

and to provoke thought among scriptural literalists, the value of his work to the scholarly and non-LDS community is limited by his ahistoricism and excessive use of proof texts. This approach, regrettably, should be quite familiar to those whose knowledge of the gospel derives primarily from their favorite passages of scripture, quotations from prophets, sacrament meeting talks, and the instruction of the Church Education System. Yet Anderson's expectation of seamless coherence and logical consistency between twenty-first century science and statements in scripture and by Latter-day prophets, regardless of time and place of origin, is unrealistic. Obviously, Latter-day "doctrine" does not meet Anderson's expectation, but neither would the doctrines of any other religious organization. Anderson's portrait reflects the organizational myth of an eternal, unchanging gospel, but fails to capture the fluidity, creativity, and dynamism of Mormon culture.

Anderson shows that Mormons should not expect science and scripture to reveal the same everlasting truths. Yet he fails to move beyond this realization. In fact, like many apologists at FARMS, Anderson confuses the claims of scripture and prophecy with those of science and history. In this respect, he reproduces the very problem he identifies. As long as Mormons and ex-Mormons continue to conflate revelation with science and history, then Mormonism will continue to be plagued with a conflict between science and religion, so ably and accessibly outlined in this new book by Anderson.

Murder, with a Side of Philosophy

Paul M. Edwards, *The Angel Acronym* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2003), 250 pp.

Reviewed by Michael Austin, dean of Graduate Studies, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and an avid reader of Mormon mysteries

Paul Edwards's first mystery novel, *The Angel Acronym*, is not exactly a religious novel, but it is a novel in which the characters spend a great deal of time talking about religion. And the religion that everybody is talking about is the Community of Christ, the religious organization known formerly (and in the novel) as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Nearly all of the characters—including the murder victim, the perpetrator, and the wise-cracking amateur sleuth—are employees of the RLDS Temple School in Independence, Missouri, and the culture of the Church and its bureaucracy pervades nearly every aspect of the novel.

The main character and crime-solver in the novel is Toom Taggart, director of the RLDS Education Department and, like Edwards himself, a philosopher by