

Letter

Wonderful Personal Voice

Sheldon Greaves's article "The Education of a Bible Scholar" (42, no. 2 [Summer 2009]: 55–77) was moving and impressive in many ways. It is a choice example of combining academic insights with personal experience, including both doubts and satisfactions covering the life of an educated LDS man.

His discussion about the Book of Mormon being pseudepigraphic, or not, and other informed inquiries about the Bible, and Mormon doctrine, studies, and practices reminded me of a classic story that circulated widely when I was an undergraduate at Columbia University. One of the most famous professors was Mark Van Doren. An ambitious graduate student reportedly asked for a private audience with Professor Van Doren to talk about questions of authorship of works attributed to Shakespeare and/or Marlowe. "Young man," replied Van Doren, "you don't know enough even to discuss that matter with me."

That's the way I feel about many of the scholarly inquiries into the origins and meanings of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and a whole range of theological issues. My liberal arts and legal educational experiences, and analytical skills gained as a studious and thinking person, allow absorption of some of the academic concepts discussed by scholars such as Greaves. I enjoy reading their works even with the need to probe doubts and questions quite naturally arising. However, my training in ancient scripture scholarship is limited enough

that I can make no claim of expertise sufficient to enter a debate.

Yet my humanity, with reason and faith, resonates with reality while reading such an article. I am warmed by knowing of personal experiences of others that combine intellect and faith, including the inherent challenges. Heart, mind, and spirit are uplifted by Greaves's story of Professor Jacob Milgrom's blessings, in Hebrew and English, for the benefit of a student departing from the class by reason of illness. Intellectual debates are set aside when "his voice ached with tender concern, with unvarnished charity for a fellow human being, but most of all, it radiated compassion" (76).

Finally, Greaves's closing comments were very choice as he described the Bible as a living and moving account of people who wrestled with questions of God, morals, ethics, and law. So fully I agree that in Bible readings "we must allow for alternate and even dissenting voices, for the Bible incorporates them into its very fabric." And "modern biblical criticism is . . . the process of the refiner who strips away the dross and tries, however imperfectly, to see the Bible for what it is: a wonder of the human spiritual quest—warts, scars, and all" (77).

Those insights offer comfort and meaning to your readers. Thank you, *Dialogue*, for publishing that wonderful personal voice.

Don B. Allen
Salt Lake City