



Mormonism and Early Christianity

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Tina says

I love the essays in this book on the temple, it really helps to explain the symbolism and traditions handed down from culture to culture. He is well versed on ancient works and compares all the different works and shows you the similarities among them, which roots out the culture based traditions and reveals the actual ordinances/rites given to Adam/Eve. I found it thought-provoking but it does take a great deal of focus to get through it all, but worth it.

Terry Earley says

The question is not "are Mormons Christians", but as you study the early Church, you wonder "are Christians Mormons".

In some surprising comparisons, we marvel at the similarities between doctrines and practices between early Christians and modern day Mormons.

Michelle says

A very comprehensive look at the differences between Mormonism and Early Christianity. The beliefs of the early Christian Fathers (like Origen) were very similar to mormonism. He takes you through the dark ages and Christianity today. A must read!

Jake says

Although Nibley has a great sense of humor, and is extremely well-read in a number of languages, when he starts talking about proof for Mormon scripture he uses shoddy scholarship.

To understand Nibley's approach to scholarship, see:

Salmon, Douglas F. "Parallelomania and the Study of Latter-day Scripture: Confirmation, Coincidence, or the Collective Subconscious? Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 33, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 129-156.

Dave says

I learned a lot about early Christianity from this book, but most of all I really felt like I was discovering what the New Testament meant for those living at that time. I think today we have a natural, and justified, view of the New Testament, likening it to ourselves and taking the lessons and thoughts and applying it to our time. And since scripture can have multiple meanings and multiple fulfillment, that's completely valid. This book

helped me see that the lessons I see for myself aren't what they saw.

Even though I've studied the scriptures all my life and knew about the 'Great Apostasy' I think there was a part of me that thought that the members of the early church were giving each other pep talks and trying to make it work and maybe they could last a while. But they didn't think that way because the New Testament didn't teach that. It was quite eye opening how, dare I say 'fatalistic'?, their attitude was. And yet even though they knew the truth would be lost they still did their best. I think it's a different type of courage than holding on for the greater good, knowing your cause will succeed for the others around you. These early members of the church instead knew that night would fall and the dawn wouldn't come for a long, long time.

The first half of this book seemed to go quick, filled with new insights and discoveries, but I really had a hard time with the second half. This book is filled with references of all kinds, and although I see Nibley's wit here

and there, it's a collection of scholarly works and they are, in a word, intimidating.

Dilworth says

This book makes quite a case that the earlier the Christianity, the more similar it is to LDS beliefs and doctrine.

Chris says

Difficult to push through in some parts, but gives a great understanding to those interested.

Jason says

I know it is fashionable in some circles to object to Hugh Nibley's intellectual approach and style, but I always have enjoyed his books. His work sours me to further study and curiosity about my own faith as well as various ancient and modern cultures.

Todd says

Read it for yourself.

Tom says

First time I've read more than a page or two from Nibley. I learned a lot and got a lot of context for his thinking style. He definitely saw a lot more apostasy prediction in the New Testament than I was used to, and his coverage of the gates of hell not prevailing against the church was very interesting. I also really liked that some of the papers were written for non-LDS audiences.

That said, sometimes Nibley gets a bit like Nash in "A Beautiful Mind", drawing connections everywhere.

The paper on the prayer circle got most extreme in this regard, I think. (But there were interesting, compelling things in there, too.) In "The Way of the Church" here, he even spends tens of pages talking about the extreme power that translators and historians wield, just to follow up with his own translation/interpretation/history without any meta argument for why we should trust him more. And I suspect it is somewhat possible to make hypotheses about the contents of ancient documents, giving assumptions for expected distributions of subject matter in advance and so on, and constructing semi-scientific experiments for chance correlations or not. But then again, being sufficiently familiar with the subject matter to formulate hypotheses might already bias things too much. Unless new ancient text discoveries drawn from the same distribution continue to be made, I guess. Anyway, I don't know if people do this sort of thing or not, since I'm not a historian myself.

I have to admit that it was also hard to follow every detail, since most of these articles are clearly written to an audience that knows more names and more of this subject matter than I do.

Anyway, I'm glad to have read this, though I don't expect to read more Nibley again, at least not for some while. And I find more spiritual nourishment in going out, serving, and living Gospel principles than in reading academic work. Perhaps Nibley would say the same thing, too, based on some of his comments. Still, again, I enjoyed the read overall.

A couple more items I remember liking. The allegory of the man with the fatal illness becoming "eschatological" was very insightful. Also, I liked the coverage of the one temple idea. In my own Old Testament reading long ago, I found this matter very pronounced. It made me also think of things like the Kaaba (mentioned by Nibley) and also LDS General Conference.

I was also glad I've been studying German recently, since it let me understand just a bit more than I'd have understood otherwise. Nibley doesn't always translate quotes or titles.

Doris says

I enjoyed reading about the works that have been found on the early church. I knew some things had been changed in the Bible, but I had no idea how many things. This gave me a much firmer grasp of how the Great Apostasy came about and what all it involved. I also enjoyed seeing the proven similarities between the early church and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Scott says

I keep coming back to essays in this volume. I'm sure there are other authors that have written more up-to-date treatises, for example, on temple references in pseudographia, but Nibley has to be one of my favorites.

Jeff Crosby says

Transferred marked passages to ebook.

Lisa says

Hugh Nibley has done more than any other scholar to demonstrate how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a restoration of the church and gospel as established and taught by Jesus Christ. This book explores that topic brilliantly. The first four essays are especially intriguing: "Early Accounts of Jesus' Childhood"; "Evangelium Quadraginta Dierum: The Forty-day Mission of Christ--The Forgotten Heritage"; "The Early Christian Prayer Circle"; and especially interesting to me, "Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times." I only wish that all the Latin and German in the text and footnotes had been translated for the reader who studied other languages. Extremely worth reading.

Joe Atwood says

It is a lecture series in print, so it is more accessible and conversational than his other books, which most people love, and because much of the information is covered in other volumes, doesn't detract for those who love to read Nibley. It has some of the most potent and up front examples of apostolic succession issues for modern scholars that must be dealt with in any review of Catholic history or LDS ideas of apostasy.
