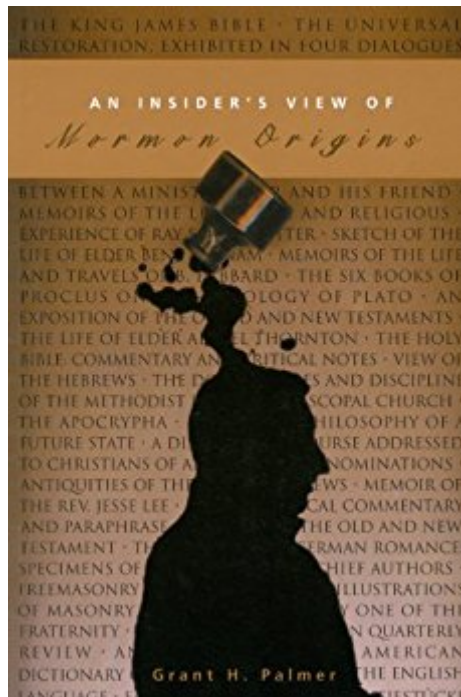


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An Insider's View Of Mormon Origins



Synopsis

Over the past thirty years, an enormous amount of research has been conducted into Mormon origins—Joseph Smith’s early life, the Book of Mormon, the prophet’s visions, and the restoration of priesthood authority. Longtime LDS educator Grant H. Palmer suggests that most Latter-day Saints remain unaware of the significance of these discoveries, and he gives a brief survey for anyone who has ever wanted to know more about these issues. He finds that much of what we take for granted as literal history has been tailored over the years—slightly modified, added to, one aspect emphasized over another—to the point that the original narratives have been nearly lost. What was experienced as a spiritual or metaphysical event, something from a different dimension, often has been refashioned as if it were a physical, objective occurrence. This is not how the first Saints interpreted these events. Historians who have looked closer at the foundational stories and source documents have restored elements, including a nineteenth-century world view, that have been misunderstood, if not forgotten.

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Customer Reviews

The author of this exceptionally clear & thoroughly documented book is an active, fourth-generation Mormon, a 34-year professional historian and Mormon-studies director at college-level religious institutes. From the Preface: "I, along with colleagues, and drawing from years of research, find the evidence employed to support many traditional [official Mormon] claims about the [Mormon] church to be either nonexistent or problematic." Chap. 1 ("Joseph Smith as Translator/Revelator") concludes that Jos. Smith "mistranslated a number of documents" including the Book of Abraham, used the King James Bible extensively in constructing the Book of Mormon, also weaving in many 19th century concerns, and that the Book of Mormon is of "no value in trying to learn more about ancient America or the Middle East." Chap. 2 ("Authorship of the Book of Mormon") concludes that the Book of Mormon is most likely a 19th-century production pieced together from sources demonstrated to be available to Smith, and therefore not a translation from ancient metal plates which, in any case, were not used and often not even present during dictation to scribes, done by looking not at plates but into a hat with a stone placed in it, often separated from his scribe by a blanket hung between them. This chapter also mentions DNA evidence demonstrating that the origin of Native Americans is not as claimed in the Book of Mormon. Chap. 3 ("The Bible in the Book of Mormon") demonstrates the King James Bible as source for numerous reworked Book of Mormon stories, many anachronisms and King James translators' errors copied in this erroneous form into the Book of Mormon. Quote: "Why would God reveal to Joseph Smith a faulty [mistranslated] KJV text?"

Having just finished reading "An Insider's View of Mormon Origins" by Grant H. Palmer, all I can say is, Wow! This is an incredible book. One I, and many other hopeful Mormons, have been waiting a long time for. Palmer is a 34 year veteran of the Church Educational System and is a practicing member of the Mormon church. This is no expose' but he admittedly deals openly and frankly with his topic. "I feel good that I do not cloak the issues in ambiguities...qualifiers and disclaimers", he writes. He is obviously concerned about the way the church is presenting its history. The book is basically an attempt, and a call, to be honest and open with this history. "An Insider's View..." is a survey of the last thirty+ years of research done by Mormon scholars. All the big hitters are referenced: Anderson, Quinn, Jesse, Hill, Van Wagoner, Allen, Murphy, Vogel, Anderson, Bushman, (I could go on). The book is very readable, unlike some previous (informative, but overwhelming) works on Mormonism. This book could (and perhaps should) be the lesson manual for the "real" church history course in Sunday School, Seminary and Institute. I've encountered bits and pieces of the information presented in Palmers book in various publications and documents, but Palmer brings it all together in a single book and presents additional new information to tie things together in

an understandable and interesting way. To quote Palmer, this history, "rings true". This is the first book on Mormon history that I've felt I could give to fellow Mormon family or friends (or leave laying around the house for that matter) to help them understand what went on during the founding years of the church.

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