

The Mormon Review

Books and culture from an LDS Perspective



Out of the Best Books: Introducing *The Mormon Review*

By **Richard Lyman Bushman**

Inscribed in steel letters in the stairwell of the Harold B. Lee Library at BYU is the scripture that begins: “And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom [D&C 88:118].” The passage may have been Joseph Smith’s favorite. He quoted it twice in the Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer, and made the study of the best books the chief work of the Kirtland School of the Prophets. Since his time, all who appreciate the wide compass of Joseph Smith’s search for truth have cited it.

We launch *The Mormon Review*, an online journal of cultural criticism, in the spirit of seeking wisdom out of the best books. We ask: How do we seek wisdom out of books today? Where do we find the virtuous and praiseworthy? What are we called to criticize? *The Mormon Review* offers a public forum where Mormons can teach one another by exercising their critical powers on significant works.

The task, as we conceive it, is to pursue the meaning for Mormons of the millions of items that constitute our larger cultural world. What are we to make of the books, movies, art, music, politics, and exhibitions swirling about in our environment? Contributors are invited to

examine films, plays, art of any kind, TV shows, children’s books, philosophical treatises, novels, histories, documentaries, scriptures from other traditions, political speeches, poetry, popular songs, video games, entertainment sites like Disneyland—any cultural artifact that awakens their Mormon

sensibilities. The only restriction is that these items must not be by Mormons or about Mormons. We believe the spirit of the best books scripture is to search outside of Mormonism for wisdom.

We do not envision a single approach to Mormon cultural criticism. We expect each response to be individual and idiosyncratic. In our view, Mormon criticism is the sum of many variegated parts. When accumulated and deposited, however, *The Mormon Review* essays will constitute, we believe, a historic archive of twenty-first-century Mormons grappling with the world.

Essays of any length (optimally four or five pages) should be submitted using the instructions at the *Review*’s website:

www.mormonreview.org

The editorial board will judge essays on their relevance to Mormon culture, clarity of expression, and general interest.

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The Mormon Review publishes reviews of all aspects of contemporary culture from a Mormon perspective. Back issues are available online at

www.mormonreview.org

Unsolicited submissions are welcome. Please email us at mormonreview@gmail.com.