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Abstract Review of *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1997), edited by Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike.

Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike, eds. *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997. xxi + 213 pp., with index. $12.95.

Reviewed by S. Kent Brown

At last, Latter-day Saints can hold in their hands a volume of responsible studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls that takes up issues of interest and importance to them. Heretofore, too many among us have suffered from the misguiding information that has been disguised in the bright, seductive hues of sensationalism. By far the most important tour de force in the volume is the essay by Florentino García Martínez on the messianic hopes portrayed in the scrolls. García Martínez is a scholar of international repute. That he allowed his study to be published in this volume enhances its value far beyond a Latter-day Saint readership. In addition, the presence of his essay speaks volumes for the respect that he feels toward the other authors.

On the other hand, the essay of García Martínez does not fit the broad purposes of the volume, except perhaps in a very narrow sense. Of course, it serves to review thoroughly the passages that deal with or allude to messianic figures in the scrolls. In its solid and penetrating analysis lies its importance. The only evaluation on this subject by a Latter-day Saint that approaches García Martínez's study is the master's thesis written by Gaye Strathearn.[1] But Latter-day Saint readers must be aware that García Martínez begins with a different set of assumptions when he approaches a study of the Messiah. For him, everything has been a "development" from the Old Testament. That is, during the New Testament era when there was a lot of interest in a messiah, conceptions about the Messiah grew out of certain Old Testament passages that people examined for possible clues. For example, García Martínez sees Isaiah 53 and other chapters speaking of a "mysterious figure" (p. 118) who was appropriated by Christians

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1 See Gaye Strathearn, "A New *Messianic Fragment* (4Q521) from the Dead Sea Scrolls" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1992).

to point to Jesus, their suffering Messiah. In addition, the title *Son of Man* was merely "derived from Daniel 7" (p. 118). By contrast, the prophet Abinadi ties the prophesied person of Isaiah 53 directly with the coming Christ (Mosiah 14–15). And other scripture illumines *Son of Man* as a title of the coming Messiah that was known by revelation centuries before Jesus' birth (Moses 7:24, 54–55, 59, 65). On one level, scholars such as García Martínez may use terms familiar to Latter-day Saints but mean something very different and think of their origin in very different ways.

Furthermore, the essay of García Martínez points up the ambiguity in the collection. Some authors clearly wrote for Latter-day Saints; others seemingly did so only as an afterthought. Does one detect an unsettled editorial stance here? Perhaps not. But the title of the volume leads one to believe that its pages bring forward issues of interest to Latter-day Saints. And that is not uniformly true. To be sure, one must not overstate or understate one's perceptions. For heretofore control of the field has often been wrested by people who ran helter-skelter with the ball. In this volume, all the authors are persons of skill and demonstrated accomplishment, which brings a high degree of reassurance.

Andrew Skinner has taken on the largest of the subjects. True to the title of the volume, in his first paragraph Skinner mentions Latter-day Saints as persons who would be interested in the broad dimensions of the scrolls. And he is right. Keeping Latter-day Saints in mind, he offers his usually fine presentation in reviewing the complex story of the discovery of and early work on the scrolls. He also skillfully weaves a tapestry that reveals what can be said about the people who produced the scrolls, showing his abilities as a historian. But as he would be the first to admit, questions remain. For instance, one might ask why one should rely on James VanderKam for reconstructing events of the early days of scroll research in preference to Yigael Yadin and John Trever, who were principal participants. Further, the note that the Essene Gate of ancient Jerusalem was located on the northwest corner of the city has to be questioned (p. 30). Bargil Pixner showed the remains of the Essene Gate to me and others on the southwest corner of the ancient city, on the edge of the property belonging to the former

Institute of Holy Land Studies. Recent scholarship now apparently favors this spot.[2]

The excellent piece by Donald W. Parry, one of the editors of the volume, seems aimed at a non-LDS audience, as if it had originally been prepared for a professional conference. As is his custom, Parry has supported his observations very fittingly from reputable sources, an aspect of his general scholarship. I was particularly pleased to find Parry's discussion of some aspects of the book of 1 Samuel as it appears in the scrolls (pp. 59–60, 62–64). Because he has been working on this text for a long time, he is in a position to make significant comment. Fortunately for us, he chose to do so. As one might expect, problems exist. Let me note three. First, it is not clear why the author draws attention to "our knowledge of the development of . . . Greek" (p. 48). Is there illuminating evidence that the Greek language developed on a path parallel to "the development of Hebrew [and] Aramaic"? Second, the usual caricature of the pseudepigrapha is adopted without challenge (p. 67 n. 17). One can show pseudonymous authorship rather readily for some ancient texts, but not all. Others, such as the Enoch texts, may go back to a very early source.[3] Third, I was surprised to find reference to the *name Elohim* (pp. 62–64). Unlike Jehovah, which is properly a name, Elohim was used anciently as a title.[4]

The kind of treatment that one hopes for in this volume we find in the essay by Dana Pike. Like the others, he supports his conclusions properly from reliable sources, including those of Latter-day Saint writers. He takes up the topic of the plan of salvation by limiting his discussion to three important areas of doctrine: (a) premortal life, (b) purpose of life, and (c) postmortal life. One finds a nice balance throughout his discussion. When Pike explores comparisons, he finds significant differences between Latter-day Saint beliefs and those mirrored in the scrolls. Because these differences are not just minor, he answers the

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2 See *Anchor Bible Dictionary,* s.v. "Essene Gate."

3 See Michael E. Stone, "Judaism at the Time of Christ," *Scientific American* 228 (January 1973): 82, citing J. T. Milik.

4 See Keith H. Meservy, "Elohim," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 2:452–53.

question about possible LDS or Christian affinities to doctrines in the scrolls with a firm "no" (p. 74), as did Skinner (pp. 36–37).

The contribution by David Seely comes in for high praise. Here we see the work of a person who is familiar with Dead Sea Scroll materials and whose work serves as a helpful guide to the worship practices of the people at Qumran, insofar as one can reclaim them from the scrolls and other sources. Seely sensitively paints a landscape that the general reader can easily visualize. However, one misses the considerable analytical skills of the author in this piece, for the essay is chiefly descriptive. Further, the study provides no connections, except in the conclusion, to issues of interest to Latter-day Saints. Did the author initially write the essay for a different audience? Quite possibly. In another vein, one minor matter deserves comment. There is nothing to assist the reader in distinguishing between *rabbinic* and *Pharisaical* (p. 101), terms which at times mean the same thing and in other contexts do not.

The study by Stephen Ricks lays out some of the most important passages associated with matters featured in the Book of Mormon, bringing focus on a broad array of topics from covenant to priesthood. Hence, his effort matches the intent of the volume. But the study may be incomplete, perhaps rushed into the book before the subject had received Ricks's full attention. A very gifted researcher, Ricks shows off only a few of his skills in this piece. To me, it appears that he hastily gathered and set out a few notable passages from the scrolls. Unfortunately, little of his usual careful analysis appears in these pages.

Scott Woodward's research results have captured the imagination of students of the scrolls everywhere. Conference organizers have shrewdly scheduled his presentations into the last slots so that crowds stay until the end. That was certainly the case in the conference held at the BYU Jerusalem Center in April 1995, in which Woodward gave a presentation on the DNA analysis of the scrolls. His work is in a preliminary state, as his paper shows. The value will come in identifying the animal herds from which the skins came for the copying of sacred texts that were to be read on special occasions and in holy places. How so? Because there were religious laws that restricted what kinds of animal skins could be used for the texts read in the temple. Identifying the types of ani-

mal skins preferred by scribes at Qumran may tell researchers, among other things, whether these scribes followed the rules with which they were already familiar.

The length of the chapter on the Dead Sea Scrolls Database (seven pages) belies the huge amount of work that has gone into this superb product. Those who have been associated with its creation and development receive my heartiest congratulations. They deserve all the kudos that may come their way. There is only one drawback. Unless one is a subscriber to FARMS or has been involved in the production of the database program, one cannot purchase this most useful of computer programs without walking through an offset door as it were. Because of contractual obligations, BYU and FARMS cannot sell the software to an interested person unless the person first purchases a vastly inferior product from Oxford University Press that supposedly performs the same function, but does not. It is enough to make one cry.

Flaws in Production

As one might guess, there are a number of tiny flaws here and there that have more to do with the production of the book than anything else. Let me set out a few because they involve both photographs and text. First, the caption below the photograph of Cave 1 (p. 49) is inaccurate and, disappointingly, does not show the remains of the wall still standing at the entry. It was not "excavators" who made "larger openings" into the cave in modern times. The ancient people of the Dead Sea walled up the entry with stones (there are a lot of them lying about) and modern excavators have removed only parts of that original wall. Second, the photograph of the excavations at Qumran on page 187 is backward.

Third, throughout the volume one finds occasional misspellings and related mistakes. (1) For example, on page vii, line 2 from the bottom, the expression *practices of the Jews* should be altered to *practices of Jews* since not all Jews of the era were followers of the people of the Dead Sea. (2) On page 106, line 5 of the quotation, a space needs to be added: we should read "(founded) on" rather than "(founded)on . . ." (4) On page 110, line 15, the reading should be "one of the texts reads" instead of "one of the text read." (5) On page 133, line 3, the

word *Bible* needs a capital even if García Martínez may not have capitalized it in his original piece. (6) On page 186, nine lines from the bottom, the preposition *in* is missing.

Fourth, two articles feature the translation of García Martínez in passages excerpted from the scrolls.[5] It is not clear why the articles did not draw from the second edition of this translation (1996), which had appeared before this volume went to press. Presumably, García Martinez had made a number of improvements in his translation between the two editions.

Notwithstanding the difficulties—some larger than others—I would judge the volume to be an important contribution to the understanding of Latter-day Saints who have become interested in the set of issues raised by the discovery and translation of the scrolls. I am particularly heartened by the number of young Latter-day Saint scholars who have prepared themselves to engage in serious work on this sort of enterprise. I highly recommend it to readers who are the least bit curious about the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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5 See Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated,* 1st ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1994).