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## An Elegant Book on Gifts, Gifting, and Remembering

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Louis Midgley

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## AN ELEGANT BOOK ON GIFTS, GIFTING, AND REMEMBERING

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Louis Midgley

Review of David F. Holland, *Moroni: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2021). 147 pages. \$9.95 (paperback).

**Abstract:** *David Holland, the youngest son of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, is the John Bartlett Professor of New England Church History at Harvard Divinity School. Consistent with his training and focus, Holland has approached Moroni as an historian. Hence, despite the subtitle to this series about books in the Book of Mormon, Holland has done neither systematic nor dogmatic theology in his contribution.*

Latter-day Saints are aware that Moroni visited Joseph Smith and instructed him on the recovery of the Book of Mormon. Why Moroni? With the death of his father, Moroni had become the keeper of the precious Lehiite history inscribed on various metal plates. Moroni also added to his father's account (see Mormon 1–7) his own understanding of how this entire record would eventually be used by the Lord to counter the absence of genuine faith — that is, it would bring genuine light to a people ground down by sin and hence the absence of genuine faith in God. These people were then indifferent, even hostile, to new divine revelations (see Mormon 8–9). This was also Moroni's first attempt to conclude the entire Book of Mormon. He did this while cautiously wandering and carefully hiding from the slaughter and moral debauchery that was taking place around him, as he also sought to close and carefully hide the sacred text for an unknown time and also a wise purpose known only to God.

Then Moroni abridged the book of Ether, and thereby provided a history of the Jaredites, a very ancient people, that was engraved on

24 plates found by the people of Limhi in the days of King Mosiah. In her *Ether*, Rosalynde Welch provides an excellent account of Moroni's treatment of the strange record found earlier among the debris of an ancient people.<sup>1</sup> The Book of Ether also includes Moroni's second farewell (Ether 12:38–41).

Finding that he “had not yet perished,” even while “wandering” in fear of being murdered in the terrible war in which the Lamanites were about to destroy each other and also the last of the Nephites, Moroni finds that, since he had not perished, he could “write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth to my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord” (Moroni 1:4). He must also, among other things, testify of his own faith at the end of his final assortment of carefully chosen items which includes his own last farewell (Moroni 10:34).

### David Holland's Splendid *Moroni*

My first reason for reviewing *Moroni: A Brief Theological Introduction* — what I now believe is the very best in the excellent series — is that the author, David Holland, is both a former student and friend.<sup>2</sup> I am also pleased that there is not even a slight hint in *Moroni* that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic history of real people who began in Jerusalem and ended up somewhere in America — most likely in Mesoamerica.

This historical record of the Lehite colony, which also came eventually to absorb a people known as Mulekites, was finally buried in a small hill in what would later be known as the State of New York. There Moroni made it and two seer stones<sup>3</sup> available for Joseph Smith's work as a Seer, before he became a prophet who could speak for God, and thereby lead the community of the fledgling Saints. With these “interpreters,” and then his own seer stone, it was possible for Joseph Smith to somehow

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1. Rosalynde Frandsen Welch, *Ether: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020).

2. Holland's book is the last in a series of twelve “brief theological introductions” to different portions of the Book of Mormon. I have read each of the books in the series, but I have not read any reviews of those books. I decided to make my own assessment of the series.

3. In the Book of Mormon these seer stones were called *interpreters* (see Mosiah 8:6–19, 21:28; Ether 3:22; cf. Omni 1:20). In addition, we are informed in the Book of Mormon that seers are greater than prophets, but that they also speak for God, and hence are also prophets. Also note the last phrase in Mormon 9:34, which was written by Moroni.

dictate to various scribes the English text of the Book of Mormon. This book provides the founding divine special revelation of the restored Covenant People of God, including the items very carefully set out by Moroni.

### Beginning with the Conclusion

David Holland's *Moroni* is a genuinely remarkable book. I highly recommend it. Before I provide some reasons to support my very favorable opinion, I must call attention to something none of the authors of these twelve brief theological introductions has noticed.

As I remember it, in 1983 — almost four decades ago — I was with Gary Novak, one of my students, pawing through the newly arrived periodicals in the BYU Library. We happened to open the July 1983 issue of *Commentary*, the leading Jewish opinion publication. There we noticed an item by David Singer entitled “Testimony.”<sup>4</sup> That word caught our attention. Singer provided an account of the well-known fact that Jewish people were the “first to assign a ‘decisive significance to history,’ ... ‘whose essential premises were eventually appropriated by Christianity and Islam as well.’” Singer then claimed that “only in Judaism is the injunction to remember [*zakhor*] ‘felt as a religious imperative to an entire people.’”

When I read those words in Singer's review essay, I immediately *remembered* the only two fixed prayers in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These crucial prayers are part of the covenant renewal for Latter-day Saints, both of which have the crucial words *remembrance* and *remember*. If Latter-day Saints genuinely strive to *remember* and *keep the commandments*, “they may always have the Spirit with them.”<sup>5</sup> Without the Spirit with us, we simply wander in strange paths. It is, therefore, clearly not merely Judaism that has what Singer calls an

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4. David Singer, “Testimony,” *Commentary* (July 1983). This is a review essay of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982). Singer's “Testimony” can be accessed at <https://www.commentary.org/articles/david-singer-4/zakhor-jewish-history-and-jewish-memory-by-yosef-hayim-yerushalmi/>. Singer is both a gifted writer and a regular contributor to *Commentary*.

5. Over twenty years ago I began to listen very carefully to those prayers, and then, as my hearing started to decline, I also began to read them from Moroni 4 and 5 silently with those mostly young fellows who give voice to them in my ward. I have also come to see the consumption of a bit of bread and water as a miniature memorial meal, which can be truly life-giving.

*injunction* — or imperative — to *remember* and *keep* the commandments of God.

Novak and I also discovered that Professor Josef Hayim Yerushalmi, who was for 28 years the Salo Wittmayer Baron Professor of Jewish history, culture and society at Columbia University, demonstrated how the Jewish people, the most history-conscious people in the premodern world, had maintained their identity by remembering God, especially through crucial memorial rituals.<sup>6</sup> However, when Jewish scholars eventually began to write the history of their faith, they tended to do so with gentile secular categories and explanations. They were, of course, often very good at doing something that has eroded Jewish faith. Rather than being faithfully observant, they, and those who relied upon their endeavors, became merely cultural Jews. For Latter-day Saints this serves as a dire warning, since some Latter-day Saint scholars actually have ended up undermining the faith of some Latter-day Saints.<sup>7</sup>

This was not, however, the only thing that Novak and I found immediately attractive and informative in Professor Yerushalmi's book. Instead, we were led to the first endnote in the book, where he listed three scholars who explain in great detail “the meaning and functions of this verb [*zakhor*].”<sup>8</sup> The first essay mentioned in that endnote was published in 1962 by Brevard Childs.<sup>9</sup> There we discovered that the Hebrew verb *zakhor* (“to remember”) appears 169 times in all periods in the Old Testament. That verb does not mean merely to recall information, like the alphabet, one's name or address or telephone number, and so forth. One who is known as an excellent cook, who does not fix an appointed meal, has *not remembered*. One who has even written essays and books about mercy and love, who is not merciful and genuinely loving, has *not remembered*. *A husband who is not strictly faithful to his wife has not remembered*. One ought to remember that those who are endowed have made a covenant to build and defend the Kingdom of God. Instead, one has *not remembered* (but has forgotten), if one has not actually done

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6. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*. This little volume, when it was first published, was just short of a hundred pages of text. It has been reprinted many times and translated into a half-dozen languages. A revised and enlarged edition appeared in 1996, with an important foreword by Harold Bloom.

7. For me, the key issue is how one situates the Book of Mormon — is it an authentic history of real people, or is it merely frontier fiction fashioned by Joseph Smith?

8. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 119n1.

9. Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SMC Press, 1962).

something that is required or that one has promised to do, including strict obedience to the sacred covenants one has made. We are all constantly faced with the critical question — have we really *remembered*?

When I read the monograph by Professor Childs, I verified the meaning of *zakhor* by queries with those at BYU who knew biblical Hebrew, including Hugh Nibley. I then turned to the Book of Mormon and, with Novak, was stunned to discover that this radically different way of understanding *remembrance* appears 227 times in essentially the same way as *zakhor* does in the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>10</sup>

At the 1984 Mormon History Association conference held at BYU, Novak and I presented (and circulated) a paper entitled “Remembrance and the Past,” a version of which we eventually published.<sup>11</sup> I have since published a series of essays, reviews, and book notes on what we began to call the “Ways of Remembrance.”<sup>12</sup> See also the address entitled “Remember and Perish Not,” by Elder Marlin K. Jensen, then Church Historian, in the Saturday afternoon session of general conference

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10. This is possible by consulting entries for “remember,” “remembered,” “rememberest,” “remembering,” and “remembrance” in R. Gary Shapiro, compiler, *An Exhaustive Concordance of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Hawkes Publishing, 1977).

11. Gary Novak and Louis Midgley, “Remembrance and the Past,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 2 (2007): 37–65. Gary has subsequently published an essay entitled “Revisiting Remembrance,” in *Remembrance and Return*, ed. Ted Vaggalis and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2019), 197–210. See also Steven L. Olsen, “Memory and Identity in the Book of Mormon,” in *Remembrance and Return*, 147–64. Olsen has, I am pleased to indicate, gone far beyond my own work on how the “Ways of Remembrance” are set out in the Book of Mormon.

12. I published: (1) “Ways of Remembrance,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 168–76; (2) “‘Oh Man, Remember, and Perish Not’ (Mosiah 4:30),” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 127–29; (3) “‘To Remember and Keep’: On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 95–137; (4) Unsigned review of *Memory in the History of Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Michael A. Singer, *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004): 409; (5) “Preserving and Enlarging the Memory of the Saints,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 21–24; (6) “Book of Mormon as Record,” *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 45–51; and (7) “A Giving of Accounts,” in *Remembrance and Return*, xxvi–xxvii.



in April 2007,<sup>13</sup> which is an indication that awareness of the *Ways of Remembrance* had moved beyond a few Latter-day academics.

It turns out that Holland is the only one of the twelve authors in the “brief theological introduction” series to call attention to the importance of remembrance in the Book of Mormon. Of course, he had the advantage of commenting on the sacrament prayers. However, with *remembrance* being in the Book of Mormon 227 times, one might expect that perhaps several of the authors who made a close reading of their assigned portions of the Book of Mormon would have noticed the *Ways of Remembrance*.

### Virtue by Habituation

I urge readers of *Moroni* to pay close attention to Holland’s important chapters in *Moroni*’s book on the ordinances. He explains that

as Moroni’s instructions on the ordinances turn toward the administration of the “flesh and blood of Christ unto the church,” he offers the Book of Mormon’s only statement on ritualized prayer (Moro. 4:1). He provides the precise wording of the blessings on the sacrament — wording that he indicates came from Jesus Christ four hundred years earlier, wording that would be essentially affirmed in a subsequent revelation to Joseph Smith fourteen hundred years later. (p. 36)

This ritual offers, among other things, what he calls “a moment of shared reliving, a chance to collapse the temporal distance between sacred times of the past and the regular occurrences of the present” (p. 36). We even, for a few moments “transcend the barriers of time that separate generations of God’s children” (p. 36). We reach back to the event where Jesus was with his apostles. The only change has been in one word, from *wine* to *water*. Hence, behind this “seemingly simple ritual of the sacrament,” he finds what he calls “a host of blessings” (p. 37).

What we see in the instructions on the sacramental prayers is a community intent on personal transformation that starts with “a discourse on pure love” (p. 38). He explains how the mere repetition of a ritual can result in such a transformation. However, he grants that he does “not take the sacrament because I always remember Jesus Christ, because I always keep his commandments, or because I always bear his

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13. Marlin K. Jensen, “Remember and Perish Not,” *Ensign* 37, no. 5 (May 2007), 36:38, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/05/remember-and-perish-not>.

name well” (p. 39). Latter-day Saints do not take the emblems because they are perfect. Instead, they do so because they desire to be Saints — that is, genuine Holy Ones. He describes his own reasons for partaking of the sacrament as follows:

I go to church and partake of the sacrament because I want to be more mindful, more righteous, and more courageous. I hope to remember, obey, and represent better. The sacrament is, in this sense, much less about who I am and much more about who I yearn to be. (p. 39)

The sacrament is *not* a way of witnessing to the congregation that one actually does *remember* Jesus Christ and *keep* his commandments. Instead, it is a way of renewing our own covenants. Hence, Holland correctly insists that “the sacrament prayer makes no reference to any such messaging to fellow mortals” (p. 39). Instead, they witness to “the one Being who already knows absolutely everything about me. I am at no risk of deceiving him. He is fully familiar with the yawning gap between who I am and who he wants me to be” (pp. 39-40).

Holland has made what he calls a “rough calculation” that a Latter-day Saint who reaches age 80 “will partake of the sacrament some four thousand times. This reliable punctuation to our weekly calendar — [is] a conscious effort to step repetitively into a *state of remembrance* toward Christ and into a covenantal conversation with our God” (p. 40, emphasis added).

At this very point Holland introduces Aristotle. Why? Aristotle thought that humans become excellent — that is, acquire the virtues — by doing the same thing over and over again. This he called *habitus*. (Alexis de Tocqueville could then later describe the virtues as “habits of the heart.”) Holland sees that this salutary habituation in the virtues is accomplished by repetition.<sup>14</sup> Such actions can even “rewire a soul. Like a pianist running through scales over and over again, this repetitive ordinance sharpens [our] reflexes of remembrance and covenanting” (p. 40). “Scales do not,” of course, “an artist make, and neither are the ordinances sufficient for the full development of discipleship, but the conditioning exercises of the sacrament help shape a disciple’s character.

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14. For an extended treatment of the need for habituation, see N. T. Wright’s *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012). This is a 307-page setting out of the same issues that Holland addresses on the salutary role played by Christian ordinances in assisting in transforming our souls.

Week by week, crust by crust, sip by sip, I change. Or, at least, I should” (p. 40).

Latter-day Saints now see partaking of the Lord’s supper as something that should be done frequently, just as Moroni set it out for them in his description of how the church should function. This sets Latter-day Saints apart from some Protestant congregations that conduct this ordinance only once or twice a year, but not Roman Catholics and Anglicans. Holland, as the only historian among the other authors in this series, is uniquely equipped to compare and contrast such things as the different styles and frequency of sacramental practice. He is also aware that the Church once “played around” with different frequencies for the sacrament, but soon settled on the pattern of administering the sacrament, when possible, each Sunday by following Moroni (p. 42).

Holland also addresses two complaints against the way Latter-day Saints administer the sacrament. First, some Protestants sometimes complain that we are far too liberal in whom we allow to partake of the emblems — including, even, very small children. This, they insist, undermines “the solemnity that should attend such a sacred ritual” (p. 42). Holland sees the extensive participation as a way to “train a Saint’s soul” for life by what he calls “a regular discipline” in “the gradual development of our being” (p. 42).

Of course we face the possibility of “empty formalism” (p. 42). However, the “sacramental habit can be powerfully transformative, but only if it does not descend into thoughtlessness” (p. 43). One must actually seek sanctification and hence holiness, and become a genuine Saint, or they have “lost power” and have ignored a genuine gift from God. He also insists that the emblems of the sacrament shed their ordinary attributes for us precisely because of the prayer to God himself, in the name of Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify them. Almost anything can be made an instrument of Light. “God can take the most mundane of materials and turn them into miraculous instruments of redemption” (p. 44).

### Gifts

Holland begins *Moroni* with an “Introduction” (pp. 2-4) in which the words *gift*, *gifts*, *giving*, and *giver* appear 25 times.<sup>15</sup> He also set out some of the questions he seeks to answer. These include “[a] What is the relative agency of the giver and the receiver in the exchange of a gift?

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15. Holland’s “gift words,” which appear a total of 135 times in his book.

[b] Do true gifts come with obligations or are they given freely? [c] How does a diverse distribution of divine gifts affect the way our communities [of faith] function and our relationships develop?” (p. 4).

In stressing God as the *great giver*, Holland seeks to describe “the character of a God whose nature is to give” (p. 4). Moroni, we are told, longs for a community open to the *gifts from God*, while he is on the run in a situation where divine things are being trampled. Hence,

As the book [of Moroni] opens, we find Moroni roaming through a forbidding environment. As it closes, we envision him ascending toward heaven. His personal transformation over the course of the book, from plodding wanderer to soaring angel, illustrates the redemptive impact of God’s greatest gift, Jesus Christ. Both human and divine, both embodied and spirit, both just and merciful, both crucified and alive, Jesus himself represents the elevating contrasts that often lie at the heart of God’s giving. (p. 4)

Holland sees Moroni as “a proclaimer of gifts” (p. 2), not as a chronicler of events, as are all the other authors in the Book of Mormon. Put another way, gifts and gifting are mentioned much more frequently by Moroni than by any other author in the Book of Mormon.

In “A Note about Order” (pp. 6-8), Holland explains that for the most part he will follow closely the order in which Moroni set out the themes in his book. The reason is that he demonstrates that the items in Moroni were carefully sorted for specific purposes (p. 6). He also insists that Moroni knew far more about the Lehite past “than about what is happening in his present moment” (p. 6). Moroni was thus freed from being a chronicler of events, so he was able “to assemble his historically disparate materials according to his own purposes” (p. 6).

Holland sets out seven of these purposes, which he labels Moroni’s “soteriological sequence” (pp. 7-8). I mention these for the one who is about to read Moroni again or for the first time. I also urge the reader to take careful note of these as they read what Moroni included in his book. Holland mentions that Moroni’s “book opens and closes with an expression of faith in Jesus: first as an anchor in a time of earthly insecurity and finally as the source of eternal assurance” (p. 8). Then Holland explains that Moroni’s own “path to salvation runs as follows: The Savior gives the rituals that form the church. The church then helps inform the soul. The soul then conforms to Christ. And every step on that path acknowledges the generosity of a giving God, whose gifts flow through the greatest gift of all — his only begotten Son” (p. 8).

### “A Prophet on the Lam”

Moroni was, according to Holland, deeply troubled by his own mistakes; he was also “inclined to worry and self-doubt in a world falling apart around him, and determined to hold on to his faith” as he finished the Book of Mormon (p. 13). Is such uncertainty also part of our own experience in our mortal probation? The answer should be obvious.

Moroni wanders without knowing where he will end up. He gifts to us an assortment of items he wanted to share with the Lamanites, who are, then and there, intent on killing him and those of his remaining associates who might still have survived. He is, of course, troubled by the real danger and difficulty of what he must keep on doing. In his first chapter, Holland describes Moroni as both “resolute and unsure,” while “on the run.” He also pictures Moroni as unsure and unsettled, where “we expect the prophetic voice to be confident” (p. 10). While he wanders, Moroni worries about imperfections in his work, but he is “holding out hope that God’s work will be done despite human imperfection” (p. 12). Such a one has thereby begun to grasp the need for and advantages of meekness, which is itself a virtue.

In the next chapters in his own book, Holland questions why a “fugitive prophet, running for his life, [would] suddenly begin etching specific ritual procedures onto the plates” (p. 16). “Against the backdrop of the high drama in which Moroni finds himself — a flight for survival against mounting odds — the next chapters of the book of Moroni head in a decidedly undramatic direction” (p. 16). Moroni sets down instructions on such things as

the proper way to confer the *gift* of the Holy Ghost, the steps for ordaining priests and teachers, and the specific wording for consecrating the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper follow in rapid succession. These things come from a man well aware that he will not live to see a church community capable of implementing these practices. They are offered to a people, the Lamanites, who at that point showed very little interest in the message and had very little reason to trust the messenger. (p. 16)

### Acquiring the Virtues—and Habituation

At this point Holland turns to Aristotle for an explanation. Aristotle is, of course, known for several things. He seems to have thought that God was pure thought thinking about thought, or a mover who merely

initiated the motion in the cosmos, but who had no need for or interest in human beings. A being unable or unfit for social life, according to Aristotle, “would have to be either a beast or a god” (p. 17).<sup>16</sup> But Aristotle is also famous for insisting that human beings are social beings — they need each other to survive and prosper. Aristotle sharply distinguishes between humans — none of whom are self-sufficient, and hence need each other — and his own understanding of divine things. But Aristotle also thought that humans acquire virtues only by habituation — that is, by doing the same things over and over until that becomes a “second nature.”<sup>17</sup>

The first five chapters of Moroni’s book deal with, among other things, the procedures and proper practices within a community of Saints — a church — which for Moroni no longer existed. We should pay attention to two letters from his own father that Moroni inserts in his own book. These constitute correctives to what could otherwise be seen as a kind of Rameumpton-style “formalism,” which is contrasted with “structural instability,” according to Holland (pp. 19-20). The struggle is between what he also calls “dead works” that tend to “obscure ... the atoning grace of the Savior” (p. 21) and hence the possibility of genuine spiritual renewal.

At this point Holland shifts from following exactly Moroni’s own ordering of the contents of his book. The reason is to counter what otherwise may seem to be the stress on both the crucial role and also the proper form of ordinances with which Moroni begins his book. He wants to be sure that his readers see in Moroni what Holland calls “a link between order and human decency” (p. 22), which are some of the fruits of the virtues. In the ancient world there were attempts to winnow the virtues and hence thereby identify what came to be known as the Cardinal Virtues — courage, justice, prudence, and temperance (or moderation). To both learn and then practice these virtues would make one a flourishing human being and hence happy. Christians later added faith, hope, and love, since these virtues were necessary for sanctification (Moroni 7).

Faith, hope, and love are the virtues that go beyond the Cardinal Virtues and generate and sustain what Holland calls “the external structural bonds of community [that] play an important role in developing the genuine sentiments of empathy housed within our hearts” (p. 22). This he then contrasts with what is found in the second

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16. Citing Aristotle’s *Politics* (New York: Penguin Book, 1992), 1253a.

17. See N. T. Wright, *After you Believe*, 39–42.

letter by Mormon that Moroni includes in his book. He describes this as the “scriptural record’s most nauseatingly graphic references to rape, murder and cannibalism — show[ing] the steep fall of a nation living in *disorder*” (p. 22). Those two letters from his father that Moroni includes in his book demonstrate that lacking such order is to risk losing the capacity to love (p. 22). Moroni sees the ordinances as divine gifts to humans, who must be prepared to receive them for the high purpose for which they were given. Otherwise, those gifts can become a curse.

Holland raises the questions, but does not always answer them, related to the differences between the language found in Moroni’s book on the proper order in the church and current church practice. Chapter Two’s title is “The *Gifts* of Sacred Community in a Time of Chaos,” but much of the chapter contrasts the language found in Moroni 2 through 6 with what Holland describes as current church practice. I strongly urge readers to pay close attention to his cautious and careful treatment of the issues he raises. One reason is that he argues that

even as these opening passages on ordination and authorization point to the official structures of a Christian community, Moroni’s history of Christ’s visit simultaneously reminds us that the authority of office is not the same thing as divine power. Indeed, these chapters seem to insist on driving home a distinction between the two. The act of ordaining may convey a role of particular responsibility within the church, but the power of God is something other than that. It is bigger in its capacity and more universal in its distribution than a narrow fixation on ordination could possibly accommodate. (p. 24)

Then he points out that the resurrected Lord gave “the authority to confer the *gift of the Holy Ghost*” on his disciples, but the *power* to do so came only *after* “mighty prayer” (p. 24).

Put bluntly, power comes through prayer, and not merely by ordination, and hence it necessarily comes from the Holy Spirit. This eventually leads Holland to say that one should not lose confidence in the “*gifts* and callings of God” merely because they are brought by “a fellow fallen creature.” Such “*gifting* involves both high personal spiritual standards and community of generous acceptance” (p. 29). He then asks: “Who are the givers and who are the receivers in this community of gifting?” His answer is that “givers and receivers have distinctive roles and obligations, but we all occupy both positions” (p. 31).

This leads to some nicely set out but rather blunt comments on how the “modern Church’s singular and paradoxical effort both to maintain a very high notion of priestly power and to impart it relatively widely has unleashed radical and conservative instincts, generating its share of ecstasy and agony” (32). I highly recommend Holland’s reflections on what he describes as “the recovery of old truths and the discovery of new light” (pp. 31-33).

### The Conclusion—Again

I have not nearly begun to set out the excellence of *Moroni*. I hope I have included a sufficient account of the gifts that Holland brings to his “brief theological introduction” to *Moroni*’s final testimony.

### Addendum

The Maxwell Institute’s “brief theological introduction” series seems, to me, to be a direct response by J. Spencer Fluhman, the director of the Institute, to remarks made by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in 2018.<sup>18</sup> “I come tonight,” Elder Holland said, “in my true identity as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>19</sup> He then demonstrated how and why Elder Maxwell fully endorsed the kind of scholarship that had been produced by what had originally been known as the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS).<sup>20</sup> Hence the title of Elder Holland’s address: “The Maxwell Legacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”

Among other things, Elder Holland set out the reasons why the Apostles will not tolerate at BYU a Latter-day Saint version of the “Mormon studies” programs fashionable at other universities,<sup>21</sup> and certainly not the kind of “secular religious studies” first launched by two gents in England, one of whom ended up in the United States and the other in Australia.

“About four years ago, at the university’s invitation,” Elder Holland indicated, “three outside scholars reviewed the circumstances the institute was then facing and wrote nineteen pages of observations. Some

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18. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Maxwell Legacy in the 21st Century,” in *2018 Annual Report, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship*, 9-21, <https://byumiuploads.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2019/06/2018-Maxwell-Institute-Annual-Report-small.pdf>.

19. *Ibid.*, 9.

20. The name of the Institute was eventually changed to honor Elder Maxwell.

21. Holland, “The Maxwell Legacy,” 14-15.



of what they said addressed the matter of apologetics broadly defined.”<sup>22</sup> He quoted and cited ten times this “external review” of the Maxwell Institute,<sup>23</sup> which was conducted by Terryl Givens, David Holland, and Reid Nielsen<sup>24</sup> and submitted in December 2014. The review was conducted because of concerns over what was described as a “new direction” that was put in place early in 2014 by the then-serving Executive Director of the Maxwell Institute.

Elder Holland made it clear that, whatever the merits of what are now called “Mormon studies” programs — which are at least necessarily patterned after purely *secular* religious studies<sup>25</sup> and currently found in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere — they are not acceptable at the Maxwell Institute or elsewhere at BYU.

This series of twelve books on the Book of Mormon was the idea of J. Spencer Fluhman, who now directs the Institute. These books seem, to me, to be a direct response to the very forceful and carefully worded remonstrance by Elder Holland about why a Latter-day Saint version of “secular religious studies” will not be tolerated at either the Institute or BYU. Hence I see the series as a solid effort to properly honor Elder Maxwell by moving in the right direction.

**Louis Midgley** (*PhD, Brown University*) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught the history of political philosophy, which includes efforts of Christian churchmen and theologians to identify, explain, understand, and cope with the evils in this world. Dr. Midgley has therefore had an abiding interest in both dogmatic and systematic theology and the alternatives to both. His doctoral dissertation was on the religious socialist political ideology of Paul Tillich, a once famous German American Protestant theologian, most famous for his systematic theology, which is a radical elaboration of classical theism. Dr. Midgley’s encounter with the writings of Leo Strauss, an influential Jewish philosopher/intellectual historian drew his attention to the radical challenge posed by what is often called modernity to both

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22. Ibid., 14.

23. Ibid. This was the first time any of the actual contents of this “external review” had been made public. Careful attention should be given to those forty-nine endnotes in Elder Holland’s paper.

24. Givens and David Holland were later invited to contribute to the Maxwell Institute’s series of “brief theological introductions.”

25. Holland, “The Maxwell Legacy,” 15.

*the wisdom of Jerusalem, which is grounded on divine revelation, and also the contrasting, competing wisdom of Athens, which was fashioned by unaided human reason. Dr. Midgley has an interest in the ways in which communities of faith have responded to the challenges posed by modernity to faith in God grounded on divine special revelation.*

