



“Spencer’s work on the Book of Mormon is, as a whole, unmatched and unparalleled in the history of the tradition.”

— Adam S. Miller, author of *Letters to a Young Mormon*

The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology

Volume One

By Joseph M. Spencer

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Volume One

302 pages

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Description:

The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology divides into two volumes exploring and thinking about these pertinent questions. Each concerns a different part of the defense of the claim that theology is and ought to be particularly important for Book of Mormon studies. In this first volume, Spencer gathers early essays in which he gestures toward theological interpretation without knowing how to defend it; essays about why theology is important to Book of Mormon scholarship and how to ensure that it does not overstep its boundaries; and essays that do theological work on the Book of Mormon in relatively obvious ways or with relatively traditional topics. The last category of essays divides into two subcategories: essays specifically on the central theological question of Jesus Christ’s atonement, as the Book of Mormon understands it; and essays on a variety of traditional theological topics, again as the Book of Mormon understands them.

Subjects: Book of Mormon, Theology, Scripture, Faith



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The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology, Vol 1

Sometime between 2008 and 2018, a pathbreaking school of Book of Mormon interpretation—a theological school—took shape. The essays gathered in *The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology* trace and illustrate the emergence of that school, from its first stirrings to its real maturity.

Background:

For Book of Mormon scholars, the twenty-first century began in earnest when Terry L Givens drew up a balance sheet for the labors of the twentieth century. Within a few years, new developments (with deep and tangled roots in earlier work) began to appear. Grant Hardy has modeled a narrative approach that reveals the authorial and editorial complexity of the Book of Mormon. Jared Hickman has outlined a literary approach that brings the Book of Mormon into conversation with questions about the status of the secular in the American context. And Joseph Spencer has championed a theological method of interpretation that uses the Book of Mormon's entanglements with the Bible to clarify the book's message for its devoted readers. In this two-volume collection of essays written by Spencer over the course of a decisive decade (2008–2018), readers can watch the emergence and consolidation of this last school of interpretation. Essays previously published in widely scattered contexts, as well as essays never before available in print, here come together into one coherent overarching picture. That picture illustrates an important way forward for Book of Mormon studies, a road many will take over coming decades.

Key topics:

1. Theology and Theological Interpretation
2. Grace and Atonement
3. Gender in Scripture
4. The Book of Isaiah

Relevance to readers

Patrick Mason has predicted that, whereas the twentieth century was the century for Latter-day Saint history, the twenty-first century will be the century for Latter-day Saint theology. This book illustrates what the arrival of Latter-day Saint theology as a mature enterprise means for the study of the Book of Mormon. Along the way, moreover, it touches on questions of burning importance for Latter-day Saints today: gender representation, mourning, secularism's growth, grace and atonement, interfaith relations, scripture's relevance, hope, and many others.

Recommended Chapters

“The Book, the Words of the Book” – This essay shows how the Book of Mormon itself calls for a different approach to its study, privileging questions of its relevance over questions of its historicity.

“Resurrection and Grace” – This essay presents a full systematization of the Book of Mormon's conception of grace, in consonance with recent reflections by popular writers like Brad Wilcox and Adam Miller.

“Weeping for Zion” – This essay is an illustrative example of theological interpretation of the Book of Mormon, worked out in detail and brought to bear on the life of everyday faith.

About the Author

Joseph M. Spencer is a philosopher and an assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He is the author or editor of eight previous books, as well as the author of nearly a hundred articles and book chapters on philosophy and scripture. He serves as the editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, as the associate director of the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar, and an editor for the book series *Introductions to Mormon Thought*. He lives with Karen, his wife, and their five children in Provo, Utah.



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