"Common Sense" Meets the Book of Mormon

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Abstract

Thomas O'Dea's opinion of the Book of Mormon's importance in Mormonism is evident in his choice to make it the first chapter following his introduction. He spends little more than a page summarizing the Book of Mormon before he immediately turns to the question that seems inevitably to impose itself at the forefront of so many Book of Mormon discussions: how do we explain its origin? Such a preoccupation does not self-evidently present itself; one would not expect to find, and in fact does not find, that accounts of the Qur'an, for instance, typically exhibit the felt burden of "explaining" the revelations that constitute that book of scripture. That the question arises so starkly in the case of the Book of Mormon may have something to do with the striking nearness in our past of such claims to supernaturalism - "seeing visions in the age of railways!" as Charles Dickens marveled.

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