



American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism

Milton V. Backman

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The apostasy-restoration cycle is one of the active organizing principles of Mormon thought. Our children learn its rudiments early in the Sunday School training. Investigators hear it in the first lesson of the Church missionary plan. Some of our most notable scholars, Roberts, Talmage, Barker, and Nibley, have given us highly erudite versions. Now Professor Milton Backman of the Department of Religion at Brigham Young University has taken up the theme, concentrating on the preparation for the restoration, a segment of the cycle previously slighted.

The apostasy-restoration concept compelled Professor Backman to start his account of American religions with the rounding of the primitive church. More than a quarter of the book is devoted to the early church, to its metamorphosis into Catholicism, and to the Protestant reforms of the sixteenth century. Without recalling these events, the reader could not understand the direction of American religious development, that is, toward Joseph Smith's restoration of pure, first-century Christianity. To begin with the first settlements in America would rob the story of its meaning.

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