

Mormon culture: A worldview. [Review of the book *People of paradox: A history of Mormon culture*].

Cherry B. Silver, Ph.D.

2008. *The Farms Review*, 20(1), 73-93.

Terryl L. Givens of the University of Richmond in Virginia writes about Mormon literary values, history, and beliefs, arguing that the peculiar, paradoxical teachings of Joseph Smith lead to a distinct Latter-day Saint worldview. In Part I "Foundations and Paradoxes in Mormon Cultural Origins," Givens defines four paradoxes in Mormon thinking-- authority/freedom, certainty/searching, sacred/temporal, and chosen/universal. Exploring five traditional categories of culture arising from these paradoxes-- architecture, music and dance, theatre and film, literature, and visual arts, Givens describes Latter-day Saint personalities and movements in two historical waves, representing beginnings to 1890 and then 1890 to the present. Part II is entitled "The Varieties of Mormon Cultural Expressions: Beginnings (1830–1890)." Part III on the twentieth century is called "A Movable Zion (1890–Present): Pioneer Nostalgia and Beyond the American Religion." Overall Givens has situated Mormon culture and its worldview into the mainstream of western thought. He is uniquely qualified as a specialist in American intellectual history and comparative literature to theorize and make judgments. His critiques of individual works are necessarily limited in scope, but this major study cannot be ignored in present and future discussions of how Mormons think and what they are capable of creating.