

Brief Notices

*Prophesying upon the Bones:
J. Reuben Clark and the Foreign
Debt Crisis, 1933-39*

by Gene A. Sessions (University of
Illinois Press, 1992)

During the 1920s, foreign governments tapped the U.S. capital markets by selling bonds to individual investors. However, as these governments encountered financial difficulties, they found it easy to forgo payments to the U.S. bondholders. Responding to the resulting outcry from the private investors, the U.S. government formed the Foreign Bondholders Protective Council in 1933. This quasi-governmental group was authorized to negotiate directly with foreign governments to seek redress for the bondholders. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., served as the president of the FBPC almost from its inception until he resigned in 1939.

Sessions describes this period as perhaps Clark's primary public service accomplishment. Focusing on the administrative structuring of the council, Sessions relates how Clark imbued it with his ideals of honesty, trust, commitment, and honor. During this same period, Clark was also serving in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Sessions draws parallels between Clark's public policy and negotiating positions and his religious beliefs and values. Although the book lacks details about the actual negotiations, we learn that Clark was able to obtain relief from several countries. He was also successful in defending the council

from its public and private critics. *Prophesying upon the Bones* is weakest in its comparison of the 1930s bond defaults to the current developing country debt crisis. Sessions' attempts to "probe deeply into the mindset" of Clark are also subject to challenge. Nevertheless, the book provides insights into a little-known aspect of Clark's public career.

— Brent D. Wilson

*Toward Understanding
the New Testament*

by O. C. Tanner, Lewis M. Rogers,
and Sterling M. McMurrin (Signature
Books, 1990)

According to its preface, this book is intended to update O. C. Tanner's 1932 work on the New Testament for modern critical readers. In this attempt, it fails. There has been some effort to add references to more modern sources in the bibliography and in the footnotes, but these seldom influence the substance of the text. A few selections, but too few, show signs of recent work, but overall the patina of contemporary scholarship is just too thin to disguise the fact that this book is almost a century out of date.

On the one hand, the book is post-rationalist in that it adopts a naturalistic methodology and assiduously avoids the "distortion" of religious belief, but on the other hand, the book is distinctly pre-critical. There is little or no discussion of the problem of the historical Jesus, of the Quest or New