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Abstract Review of *By Study and Also by Faith*, vol. 2 (1990), edited by John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks.

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Reviewed by Gregory Dundas

By Study and Also by Faith is a two-volume set of essays known in scholarly circles as a Festschrift written in honor of Hugh Nibley. The articles are written by his colleagues, friends, and former students. The essays in the first half of the second volume, which take the Book of Mormon as their topic, are the focus of this review. As in most honorary volumes of this type, the individual contributions have very little in common, and each one will need to be reviewed briefly. I will add a few general comments about the entire collection at the end of this review.

Richard Lloyd Anderson begins the volume with a contribution entitled "Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi." His fundamental purpose is to demonstrate continuity among all the scriptures regarding the concept of the "covenant": the Mosaic covenant, the New Covenant as instituted by Christ in the Upper Room, the sacrament prayers in the Book of Mormon, and modern Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices. The basic element of continuity, he argues, is the mutuality of the covenant, which requires of the believer active dedication to the Lord's commandments. We should not be led astray by the immense inequality between man and God to believe that the covenant is entirely one-sided and that God requires nothing of us. In a brief summary of modern-day Catholic and Protestant practices and statements, Anderson argues that the fundamental element of righteousness is missing or greatly diminished in all but the Latter-day Saint ordinances. This, of course, is a case that hardly needs to be argued to convince the majority of Latter-day Saints, since by most accounts the need for obedience in the Lord's covenant virtually leaps off the pages of the New Testament and the other scriptures. Proving a direct connection with the covenant of the sacrament, however, is another matter. Central to his contention of continuity with New Testament practices is his belief that the Gospel of John should not be made the victim of "artificial walls" (p. 10) erected by scholars who see the fourth gospel as nonhistorical. He believes that John's account differs con-

siderably from the synoptic Gospels because John was writing a kind of appendix to the other three accounts, mentioning only details that they left out. He insists that scholars should be willing to synthesize, i.e., to blend "corresponding Gospel details" (p. 18). Although he does not attempt a direct refutation of the traditional attitude, he attempts to use his own synthetic approach by arguing that John 13-14 was Jesus' sermon immediately following the institution of the first "sacrament." That the ceremony of the bread and wine is nowhere mentioned in the book is evidence that John was merely supplementing the previous versions.

Such an idea is inherently appealing, but Anderson makes no attempt to explain why John gave virtually no hints about the context of the discourse he attributed to Jesus. Most interesting are the parallels he points out between the language in the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John, which he links through the phrase "from the beginning" (Gk. *ap' archēs*). Anderson sees this phrase as a "code for the Savior's teachings in connection with the first sacrament" (p. 27). Among the teachings that Anderson believes are echoed in the epistles are the commands to love one another and to keep the commandments (cf. 1 John 3:11; 2 John 1:5; 1 John 2:3). It may be difficult for most readers to see these teachings as being strictly linked with the sacrament. But although his interpretation of the phrase may be too narrow, it is an intriguing association that lends much to the symbolism of renewal in the sacramental covenant.¹

Richard L. Bushman has written on "The Lamanite View of Book of Mormon History." This is admittedly a speculative affair, but he manages to create an intriguingly consistent and not altogether superficial account of the effects of what he calls the Lamanite "founding saga," which was "ingrained in their national identity" (p. 65). Laman and Lemuel would doubtless have taught their children a different story of their flight from Jerusalem than Nephi taught his offspring. The ceaseless wars recorded in Alma, in which the Lamanites were always the aggressors, and even their desire to rob the Nephites (cf. Mosiah 10:16-17) were apparently not the result of desire for territory or wealth or even power, but rather because of "the tradition of their fathers," i.e., of Laman and Lemuel, who indoctrinated

¹ On religious symbolism regarding renewal and "beginnings," see Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

their offspring with a picture of Nephi as a liar and a robber who had constantly deprived them of everything desirable in life. This doctrine then became a part of their very world outlook.

But the Nephites had an equally inflexible view of the Lamanites, and as readers of the Nephite record we are consequently surprised at the readiness of many Lamanites to "give way" before the "simple acts of love and generosity" (p. 67) performed by the few Nephites who were willing to put themselves in the hands of their national enemies. Such love and unselfishness could well have been enough to break through the cycle of enmity that had been caused by serious misunderstanding and hatred. The moral for our own day, something that should be inherent in any great work of historical reconstruction, is plain. Most fascinating perhaps is Bushman's theory regarding the curious name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. He suggests that it was an outward sign that the converted Lamanites needed to change not only their religious thinking but also their political ideology. Despite the way the name sounds in its English rendering, it indicated that they were rejecting their old values and embracing the polar opposites. Their absolute pacifism was then the concrete proof of what their name merely symbolized.

Paul Cheesman provides us with a romp through "External Evidences of the Book of Mormon." He focuses among other things on the widespread legends of the white bearded god, numerous technological achievements in ancient Mesoamerica and Peru, and modern discoveries of writing on metal plates. This is all vintage Cheesman. Most of his sources are amateur scholars already committed to the doctrine of diffusionism, according to which cultural achievements in Mesoamerica and elsewhere were due not to indigenous invention but to intercontinental contacts.² Of course, much recent scholarship, particularly that written by natives of Latin America, has attempted to overthrow such theories, and Cheesman entirely ignores the great revolution in Mesoamerican studies of the last two decades. Still, "out of date" does not mean "incorrect," and both Cheesman and his sources raise interesting points, many of which should be seriously addressed.

² For example, A. Hyatt Verrill argued extensively in more than one book that Maya civilization was the fruit of contact with ancient Sumer.

Eugene England, in his essay entitled "A Second Witness for the Logos: The Book of Mormon and Contemporary Literary Criticism," provides two immensely thought-provoking theses, the first of which, in my estimation, is by far the more important and successful. The idea revolves around the method of reading literature typologically, which is fast becoming a truly successful approach for both increasing understanding of the Book of Mormon and defending it against its critics.³ England cites literary critic Northrop Frye's "Great Code," which is his formulation for "the great scriptural pattern which, beyond what the universe is and has been, also images for us what the life of acting agents *can be* at its most satisfying, fulfilling, and enduring" (p. 94). Frye points to "polysemous" interpretation of the Bible, in which "types" of various kinds and "metaphorical levels" can be discerned and make the Bible the most powerful book of all. To England, the Book of Mormon is even more typological in nature and is thus more powerful, especially since it is more unified. This is probably true, and it will be exciting to see what "sympathetic critics" will be able to discover through this approach in the future.

This theory, appropriately, is not only of great value for the scriptures, but it will, I believe, prove to be one of the keys to penetrating the depths of Nibley's own writings. This is implicit in England's declaration of the importance of turning "from exclusive attention to the formal elements of literature, such relationships of sound, multiple meanings, prose rhythms, concision, texture, and puns, that have preoccupied much literary criticism in this century," moving on instead to "the large *patterns* of stories and repeated events that reveal the nature of sin and salvation" (p. 96). Nibley, in turn, has criticized similar preoccupations on the part of practitioners of history and biblical studies, and focused instead in his peculiar way on patterns in literature. This has been the bane of both his critics and his friends, giving much of his work a strong flavor more of literary analysis and comparison than of history. But Nibley has always been more interested in history that is *written*—which means "to compose it, verbally, as discourse or story—that is, to *figure* it, to order it by concept and metaphor."⁴ This concern for patterns

³ See the references in England's footnotes 1, 8, 9, and 10.

⁴ Bruce W. Jorgenson, "The Dark Way to the Tree," in Neal A. Lambert, ed., *The Literature of Belief* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and

in the written records of the human race brings Nibley's visions of both literature and history close together to produce a unique synthesis.⁵

When England moves from "form" to "content," his ideas are equally intriguing but ultimately not fully satisfying. Here he joins hands with René Girard's most recent foray into the subject of violence, in which he reads the Bible as a text that becomes increasingly violence-free as one proceeds from Genesis to Revelation. Girard's idea is not so much that God himself evolved in his opposition to violence, but that in his condescension toward humans he was less strict in his declarations of his absolute opposition, and that his true attitude was only finally revealed in Christ's well-known doctrines of loving your neighbor and turning the other cheek. When England attempts to apply this "evolutionary" theory to the Book of Mormon, he immediately runs into the problematic story of Laban and his murder by Nephi, since that takes place in Jerusalem during the Age of the Prophets, a time, according to Girard, when Jehovah was outspokenly opposed to violence (cf. Isaiah 53:4; Ezekiel 33:11). England discusses and ultimately rejects the theory that Nephi could have been merely rationalizing his violent acts by insisting that it was a revelation from the Lord. He goes on to theorize that the Lord inspired Nephi to include the incident in his book as a means of demonstrating to the modern reader the difficult nature of absolute obedience as well as the anguish and pain involved in taking a life—even of someone who quite clearly deserved death. The story thereby serves as a powerful argument in favor of forgiveness and the complete renunciation of violence, which is finally typified by the pacifist Anti-Nephi-Lehies. All of this is thoroughly enlightening and edifying, but at the same time the reader is left with a sense that we are attempting to fit God into a box of our own making. Violence is intrinsic in this life, and, much as we might despise it, we should be wary of attempting to impose any kind of absolutes (from our point of view) on God.

Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1979), 228; quoted partially by England on p. 98.

⁵ Jorgenson's statement (*ibid.*, 218-19) to the effect that Nibley's approach is entirely different from his own is, in my opinion, misleading.

Paul Y. Hoskisson presents us (briefly) with "An Introduction to the Relevance of Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon." It turns out that the article is not nearly so forbidding as the title, and it certainly touches on one of the most interesting areas of Book of Mormon apologetics. As Hugh Nibley has pointed out, Joseph Smith apparently spelled the Book of Mormon's proper names letter by letter to his scribes,⁶ and this provides a solid check on our historical and cultural reconstructions. Of course, as Hoskisson points out, there is no one-to-one correspondence in transliteration any more than in translation; and Hoskisson might have added that the situation can double in complexity, depending upon how we view the relationship between Hebrew and Egyptian in the Book of Mormon. There are often many ambiguities, which allow room, Hoskisson informs us, for individual choice when attempting to trace a name back to an original root, and a single name can even be traced back to two or more languages. He also rightly points out the basic need for a full critical edition of the Book of Mormon, in order to account for such variant spellings as *Camorah* and *Comorah* as well as *Cumorah* (pp. 131-32). Finally, he stresses the need for control and proper application of all the primary languages involved in the Book of Mormon milieu (e.g., Hebrew, Egyptian, Akkadian, and many other Near Eastern languages)—no small feat! This essay is a simple and brief but thoroughly worthwhile reminder of the need for immense preparation if our scholarship on the Book of Mormon is to be truly successful.

Noel B. Reynolds provides a discussion of "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis" and attempts to show that the Genesis carried by the Nephites might have resembled the Joseph Smith Translation (and the book of Moses) more than the King James Version. Such a hypothesis immediately puts the reader on his or her guard against circular argumentation, but Reynolds's argument is in fact fairly well constructed. After a detailed outline of his method, Reynolds discusses numerous examples in which Book of Mormon authors appear to have drawn on quotations from the book of Moses. For example, 2 Nephi 9:6: "Resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression." In

⁶ Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites*, vol. 5 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1988), 31.

Moses 6:59, we get an almost perfect quotation in reverse: "By reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death." Intriguing, no?

Unfortunately, this is his only fully convincing parallel, since in many of his examples the direct parallels are limited to very short phrases. In some instances, Reynolds makes a plausible case for seeing dependence with several brief phrases in close connection. For instance, the description of Nephi by Laman in 1 Nephi 16:38 uses several words that are similar to the description of Satan in Moses 4:4. If we do decide to accept such coincidence as legitimate evidence for dependence or borrowing, it is important to note, as Reynolds indicates, that Joseph Smith gave us the book of Moses *after* the Book of Mormon, whereas the borrowing clearly must have been done in the other direction. Laman could reasonably have attempted to equate Nephi with Satan; surely no one would have done it the other way around. Reynolds also adds a secondary collection of parallels that he finds less significant individually but striking in their quantity. (There are 20 major examples and 125 minor ones listed in his appendix.) Many of the latter require a certain amount of faith on the part of the reader. Is the frequent recurrence of the phrase "wars and bloodshed" (cf. Moses 6:15; Jacob 7:24; Omni 1:3; Alma 35:15, etc.) significant evidence for borrowing? You decide.

John L. Sorenson's contribution is a brief demographic survey of "The Composition of Lehi's Family," and under that rubric he also includes discussions of Zoram, Ishmael and his descendants, and servants who might possibly have accompanied them. Sorenson's attempt at determining the respective ages of each individual in Lehi's travelling party is not "trivial" (p. 195), but it is highly speculative, being based of necessity on general statistical trends, which become of highly questionable value when the discussion is of two small families in 600 B.C. One need only think, by way of comparison, of the misleading results from numerous attempts at reconstructing any of the early Christian rites from only a handful of brief references in the New Testament. A healthy skepticism is essential when reading such accounts.

Still, one cannot fault an investigator for making an attempt, and Sorenson does the best he can with extremely limited data. The primary problem he focuses on is the matter of female years of fertility, for which he uses as a base some comparative evidence from "pre-industrial societies." According

to his calculations, "it does seem possible, barely, to accommodate all [Sariah's] children in an atypical but feasible birth sequence, which sees Laman as 23 years old upon leaving Jerusalem (born when his mother was 17) and the youngest sibling, Joseph, as 28 years younger (born when Sariah was 45). His table of respective ages in 600 B.C. leads him to conclude that there were only seven or eight strong men available for constructing the ship, and that it must have been very small in size.

In "King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles," John Tvedtnes provides a fine overview of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) as outlined in the Old Testament, and he attempts to link numerous scriptural passages, including Mosiah 2-5, to this annual festival. Through his analysis of the themes present in Deuteronomy 1-6, he suggests links with the stories of David's and Solomon's respective coronations and the elevation of various others to the throne, as well as the priestly ordinations of Aaron and Joshua. He then discusses the assembly under King Benjamin in the same spirit and finds various thematic parallels, such as temple, sacrifice, blood, covenant, and law, as well as such details as a wooden pulpit (cf. Benjamin's wooden tower) and booths (tents in the Book of Mormon). Many of these parallels are made with the post-exilic assembly recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. He concludes by noting that the attempt to identify Benjamin's assembly with Sukkot does not contradict but instead complements other attempts (specifically, by Welch and Nibley) to demonstrate parallels with other Israelite and Near Eastern ceremonies. Indeed, one must conclude that it is impossible to identify the actual festival that was celebrated in Zarahemla, since it must have developed independently of the festivals celebrated in Palestine over a period of nearly half a millennium. But the numerous parallels pointed out by Tvedtnes and others assuredly show that it did have Near Eastern (Israelite) antecedents.

Like Reynolds, John Welch is also concerned with the brass plates as a source for Book of Mormon prophets in "The Melchizedek Material in Alma 13:13-19." He also shares with Reynolds the conviction that the brass plates version of Genesis had much in common with what we now have available in the JST. Welch compares Alma's exposition on Melchizedek with corresponding passages found in the *Book of Jubilees*, 2 *Enoch* 71-72, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, Gnostic compositions, and rabbinic and patristic writings. These treatments are clearly

based on Genesis 14 and Hebrews 7 and often reflect the theological positions of their authors. (Christians tended to exalt Melchizedek, and Jews to debase him in response.) On the other hand, both the JST and Alma ignore most of the typical controversies about the ancient priest, such as whether Salem = Jerusalem or who Melchizedek's parents were. In the JST Genesis, he is depicted as a man of immense faith, who was able to perform mighty miracles and establish righteousness and peace among his people. It is this last element that Alma emphasizes in his sermon on righteousness and the priesthood. Yet curiously, he does not mention such pertinent things as the translation of faithful men or the order of Enoch, both of which receive significant mention in the JST. Instead, Alma goes far beyond any source material in discussing how Melchizedek used his priesthood and its symbolism to preach mightily the message of repentance and righteousness. In conclusion, Welch states that "Alma's use of the Melchizedek material from Genesis is conceptually and textually superior to later interpretations in which the meaning of Melchizedek turns upon ideological notions and etymological devices" (p. 263).

This is a fine article, with close examination of the pertinent texts as well as a broad perspective of a wide range of religious texts. Welch briefly but adequately discusses a variety of problems connected with this most mysterious character in all of scripture. It is clear that Alma did not know a lot more than we do about Melchizedek, but Welch helps us to appreciate Alma's great religious insight and power of discourse.

The final selection of this volume that deals with the Book of Mormon is a detailed analysis by H. Curtis Wright of a subject already touched upon by Cheesman and is entitled "Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes." The article does not mention the Book of Mormon at all. (The paper was originally published in a series on Library Science.) He discusses instead the numerous "foundation deposits" found in the Near East, which often consisted of (brief) metallic inscriptions that recorded the details of the founding of a building and the virtues of the king who built it, and which were buried either in stone boxes beneath the foundations of those buildings or in their walls. The most famous of such plates are the gold and silver plates of Darius found in Persepolis (ca. 515 B.C.), but the history of such deposits might reach back to the early third millennium B.C. Wright discusses the highlights of the two millennia or so in which such discoveries have been

made, and in fact links the "set of ten foundation plaques" (p. 296) discovered beneath the Ptolemaic (i.e., Greco-Macedonian) temple of Serapis in Alexandria with this Near Eastern tradition.

On the other hand, Wright indicates that not all such deposits were so brief or so circumscribed in their subject. Indeed, a connection has been perceived by other scholars between the building deposit inscriptions and the long tradition of royal historical inscriptions that helped to justify and legitimate the great ancient kingdoms and empires. Metal (as well as stone) was clearly used as a material for writing—not for the sake of convenience, but, among other reasons, to symbolize permanence, both for contemporaries and for future generations. Wright draws an insightful conclusion based on Nibley's writings that by building a temple or other building on top of written documents, a ruler "is saying in the sacred language of a dramatized ritual enactment that every aspect of human culture . . . is built upon the written document" (p. 302). Scholars today are arguing that the invention of writing was not quite the decisive element in the origin of civilization that it once was believed to be. But as Nibley has often suggested, we should not too quickly dismiss the appreciation of the ancients for this miracle of discourse and symbolism.

A major theme of Wright's paper is the preservation of writing from antiquity. This is a very appropriate contribution to a Nibley Festschrift, not only because Nibley has repeatedly emphasized the sacral significance of writing in antiquity, but also because it serves as a timely reminder of the grave difficulties involved in the modern-day reconstruction of any aspect of an ancient society. Many of the documents we have today were the result of an accident (e.g., accidental fires preserved nearly all the clay tablets extant today). Many others were preserved only through hundreds of years of manuscript traditions, which provide their own kinds of difficulties. Only rarely do we find a cache like the Dead Sea Scrolls that was deliberately preserved and actually survived to the modern age. All these documents require many years of detailed research to understand properly, and even then every honest scholar must admit that our modern reconstructions are generally quite tentative. We generally do not prove things, we only suggest probabilities according to the limited evidence in our possession.

The Book of Mormon is in a unique position in this regard, as it is the *only* document of *any kind* that we have from Nephite society. We are consequently in difficult straits to

demonstrate anything with certainty about the society it came out of, especially when we get to the second generation. On the other hand, it is important to realize that the difference is only one of degree (and a fairly slight degree at that), not one of kind.

The selections reviewed here amount to a veritable smorgasbord of representative works from current Book of Mormon scholarship. That very phenomenon is *sui generis* in the scholarly world, and it can be attributed almost entirely to the genius of one man, Hugh Nibley. It is often stated, partly in jest, that only a committee can replace Nibley, and if that is so, then this group is well qualified to take on the job. What can we say about the success of such an attempt?

In my estimation, Nibley's talents are legion, but chief among them are his uniquely creative thinking, his rare emphasis on studying original texts, and his broad competence over a wide range of languages and documents. These are closely connected. His almost cavalier attitude toward secondary sources and "established" scholarly conclusions has brought him repeated criticism from many, but at the same time his boldness and informed creativity bring grudging respect. With few exceptions, the contributions to this volume show true originality and likewise concentrate on the *text* of the Book of Mormon. Of course, close study of the text currently has little scholarship to draw on, but we can hope that this emphasis will not change even as the scholarly corpus grows.

However, I believe that Nibley has correctly set the tone for Book of Mormon scholarship through the use of a wide range of documents and literature. If we are to go beyond direct textual exegesis, our approach must be comparative in nature, and there is no substitute for broad preparation—extremely broad preparation. This is true for any study of the ancient world, particularly when one is attempting an entirely fresh approach to the documents. Curtis Wright echoes Nibley when he declares that "we find it much easier to analyze than to synthesize. The Modern Age has no House of Life, no temple where its knowledge [and] records can be copied and discussed and studied as a whole" (p. 305).

In the present volume, Welch wins the Nibley Award for breadth of context. Rarely do any of the other pieces show any concern for placing the text of the Book of Mormon in a broader historical and literary context. Anderson and Tvedtnes look at a variety of biblical sources. England, of course, uses a *non-historical* literary context, and Hoskisson looks forward to

placing the Book of Mormon in a broad linguistic context. Wright uses much Near Eastern material, but he is not directly discussing the Book of Mormon. On the other hand, Reynolds admits that his conclusions may be compromised by the fact that he uses only English texts. (He also makes reference to Joseph Smith as an "inspired restorer of ancient texts," which is a pertinent observation, but sidesteps the fundamental need to use original texts whenever they are available.) In addition to linguistic preparation, which is most difficult in itself, there is the simple fact that one cannot see connections between texts that one has not read. Nor does exchange of notes between scholars substitute for direct observation. For better or for worse, the student of ancient societies is realistically obligated to draw on parallel examples from different cultures to make a thorough case for almost any major thesis. Direct documentation is too sparse, and since most Book of Mormon scholarship attempts to contradict or transcend the views of contemporary scholarship, which has usually made full use of all the *direct* evidence for the topic under discussion, the need is all the greater.

The obstacles to achieving such competence are all too obvious, not the least of which are the warnings of the prophets not to neglect our many other affairs. But the challenge remains unaltered by such concerns. One is reminded of the challenge made by the Savior to his disciples that they could in fact transcend his own miraculous achievements (cf. John 14:12).

Among his contributions to the Church at large, Nibley has provided a paradigm of serious and in-depth study of the scriptures coupled with a dynamic faith that is flexible yet sturdy. This present volume is an admirable addition to that tradition, and one which will, one hopes, be accessible to a large number of the Saints.