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Nurturing through the Book of Mormon.

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Title

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Abstract Review of *Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon* (1995), by Deseret Book.

***Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995. xxxii + 186 pp., with index. \$15.95.**

Reviewed by Marilyn Higbee Walker

This book consists of five papers presented at the 1995 Sidney B. Sperry Symposium at Brigham Young University on the Book of Mormon, as well as an introductory, biographical tribute to Sperry by a former student and colleague, Ellis T. Rasmussen. Rasmussen, an Old Testament scholar, focuses on Sperry's contributions to Latter-day Saint scholarship in that field particularly, but also gives us insights into the educational and professional pursuits that made Sperry a pioneer of church education as we know it today and of academic approaches to scripture study, of which the five following papers are certainly offspring.

The first of the five papers is Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's keynote address entitled, "Rending the Veil of Unbelief." Elder Holland begins with a discussion of the Book of Mormon's unique contributions to our understanding of the premortal Christ, how it provides the "continuity of doctrine and consistent image of divinity" (p. 5) that the Old and New Testaments lack, and then focuses on the encounter that the brother of Jared had with Jehovah, as found in Ether 3 and 4. After a moving narration of the story, a consideration of the potential doctrinal problems, and a list of twenty-five items of knowledge that these Book of Mormon chapters add to our Old Testament understanding of the premortal Christ, it is the brother of Jared and his faith in Christ that emerge the hero. Elder Holland presents this prophet as an "everyman" of faith to whom we all should relate yet who "stands alone . . . in having thrust himself through the veil, not as an unwelcome guest but perhaps technically an uninvited one" (p. 17). Elder Holland closes by challenging us to be willing to "'rend the veil of unbelief' in order to behold the revelations—and the Revelation—of God" (pp. 23–4).

The second paper, by Daniel H. Ludlow, is a detailed study of "The Destiny of the House of Israel" as presented through

ancient and modern revelation. To accomplish this, Ludlow uses etymologies, semantics, word counts, and extensive scriptural quotations with helpful lists of major points, and divides his discussion into two parts: past and present truths, and future truths.

Robert J. Matthews addresses the topic of the Book of Mormon as a written document in the third paper, "The Power and the Purpose of the Written Record." Matthews divides his discussion into three parts: what the Lord says about the Book of Mormon, what Joseph says about it, and what the book says about itself. "The Book of Mormon has a mission not only to inform but also to convince. The Lord wants the Book of Mormon written, translated, distributed, read, and obeyed" (p. 96).

The fourth paper is Robert L. Millet's essay entitled, "The Regeneration of Fallen Man," and seeks to correct the common Latter-day Saint avoidance of the topic, for "to fail to teach the Fall is to lessen the effect of the Atonement" (p. 121). Almost without exception, every discussion of the atonement in the Book of Mormon is introduced by a discussion of the fall, Millet notes. In his first section, Millet presents some of the principles of the fall taught in the Book of Mormon, citing ancient prophets like King Benjamin as well as modern prophets like Brigham Young and Bruce R. McConkie. In turning to the principle of redemption from the fall, Millet shares a personal anecdote of the failure of the traditional "Rs" of repentance and then offers his own list of "Rs" that is more Redeemer-focused.

In the fifth and final paper of this collection, "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," John W. Welch defends himself, Sperry, and others quite well. Welch says in his introduction, "Without diminishing the essential power of the Holy Ghost in bearing testimony, and knowing that we cannot prove anything in absolute terms, I still speak favorably about the power of evidence" (p. 149). Welch presents several examples of ways that archaeology, semantics, word distribution, literary genre study, and other internal and external analyses can enhance our understanding and appreciation of the Book of Mormon, which can then enhance our faith. For some, evidence may be the pathway to faith, he argues. The relationship between reason and revelation is one of perennial concern to faithful scholars, but it is in his discussion of the limitations and subjectivity of evidence and proof

that Welch distinguishes himself from his medieval legal counterparts. He argues that evidence actually enhances our ability to choose faith and good works; "in ultimate matters of faith, . . . the individual must decide what configuration of evidence to require" (p. 173). All would-be scholars and would-be faithful would do well to read Welch's closing discussion of the redemption of the mind. "In the end, what we need is not a metaphor, but a metamorphosis" (p. 177).

This book is an engaging, well-balanced collection of essays by six Latter-day Saint scholars who, in the best Sidney B. Sperry tradition, obviously nurture well their own and others' faith through the Book of Mormon.