



# First Nephi: The Doctrinal Foundation (Book of Mormon symposium series)

*Monte S. Nyman, Charles D. Tate*

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In a variety of themes and approaches, the symposium papers reproduced in this volume explore in unusual depth and detail the first book in the Book of Mormon—First Nephi.

The introductory chapter, comprising remarks by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, centers on the value of the Book of Mormon in answering "the great question... Is there really a redeeming Christ?" His emphatic answer is yes, and that from the title page to the last page of this sacred scripture "God's encompassing purposes are set forth."

The ensuing chapters reinforce that concept. One of them reviews the historical background of the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, while another examines the title page itself, citing Joseph Smith's notation that it was a "literal translation, taken from the... book of plates." Other contributors demonstrate how the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ; how its biblical allusions and its affirmations of God's dealings with man establish the truth of the Bible; and how textual evidences further verify the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Both theological and practical issues are considered. B. H. Roberts's writings on the Book of Mormon and the Atonement are explored, for example, and an examination of early Christianity as described in First Nephi gives particular attention to what is there referred to as the great and abominable church. It is shown also that by small means God brings about great things, and that—along with using the Book of Mormon as a guide—keeping the commandments, following living prophets, and seeking personal revelation are vital to the objective of living close to the Lord.

Another prominent theme in First Nephi is the Tree of Life vision. One contributor suggests how this vision teaches the pattern of the eternal family; another notes that Nephi's vision of the grand vistas of the future teaches much about faith, the attributes of God, and the mysteries of God; a third examines a possible archaeological depiction of the Tree of Life of Lehi's and Nephi's visions.

In a review of the migrations to the "land choice above all others," details of the geography and customs of those times give valuable insights into Lehi's arduous trek; an analysis of Lehi's voyage demonstrates how readers can expand their understanding of such an event; and a discussion shows how the promised land was prepared and protected by the Lord and then opened to various groups of people at appropriate times.

Bringing the book to a close, President Jeffrey R. Holland adds his testimony that the Book of Mormon was "written, watched over, preserved, revealed, translated, published, and carried to the world to declare—again—that... God does speak to men."

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**Linda Yohe:**

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**Martina Smith:**

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**Edward Sullivan:**

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