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Book Notice for *A New Witness to the World* by Robert A. Rees

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Abstract: Book Notice for *A New Witness to the World* by Robert A. Rees. The reviewer notes: "This text is both devotional and academic and will be valuable to those seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the Book of Mormon through study and also through faith. It is written for faithful members of the Church, both those engaged in scholarly study of the Book of Mormon and those seeking to increase their faith."



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Sally in Three Worlds: An Indian Captive in the House of Brigham Young, by Virginia Kerns (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2021)

In *Sally in Three Worlds: An Indian Captive in the House of Brigham Young*, Virginia Kerns relates the story of the settlement of Utah through the life of Sally, a Pahvant Ute woman who lived in Brigham Young's household. On its surface, the book is a narrative of the life of one woman, but Kerns argues that "a single life can illuminate an entire cultural and social world, or reveal an unremarked but vital part of the human story" (1).

Kerns is a professor emerita of anthropology at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. She has written three books, including the award-winning *Scenes from the High Desert: Julian Steward's Life and Theory* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003). In *Sally in Three Worlds*, Kerns tackles the challenge of telling Sally's story even though she left no records of her own. In addition, rather than relying on the accounts of the leaders of the Latter-day Saint settlers, Kerns instead focuses on the perspectives of natives, settler women, and strangers in the Salt Lake Valley. By examining the complex experiences of both natives and settler women, Kerns constructs an evidence-based narrative of Sally's life both as a Pahvant Ute in a "civilized" community and as a woman in a male-dominated society.

Kerns introduces Sally's story by setting up a wild-civilized dichotomy that Kerns uses as a lens through which to examine Sally's experiences and the observations of the people around her. The book is divided into three parts that coincide with the "three worlds" Sally finds herself in throughout her life. The first part, "Mountains and Sky,"

describes the first interactions between the native tribes and the settlers in the Salt Lake Valley. It also explores Sally's introduction into a new community and lifestyle. Part two, "The Heart of Civilization," presents details of Sally's daily life while living with the other women in the Lion House and Beehive House. The final part, "Exiles," examines Sally's marriage and her "mission" to encourage other natives to adopt a civilized lifestyle. Kerns concludes by addressing several contradictory accounts that have misrepresented Sally's actual experiences.

While addressing themes such as violence and the environment, Kerns presents a sensitive narrative in a way that is both informative and impactful. Anyone with an interest in the settlement of Utah and the experiences of a variety of individuals will find new insights in Sally's story and appreciate Kerns's efforts to rediscover someone who has been overlooked for so long.

—Julia Harrison

A New Witness to the World, by Robert A. Rees (Salt Lake City: By Common Consent Press, 2020)

This book provides a series of essays that analyze and contextualize the text of the Book of Mormon while providing Professor Rees's faithful perspective on the text. Though each essay stands on its own as a separate work, the later essays, handling the context of Joseph Smith's work as a nineteenth-century American writer, do reference and build off one another. These later essays handle the backgrounds and processes of various American writers contemporary to Joseph Smith, providing an effective survey of the literary milieu into which the Book of Mormon first entered; the earlier essays are more focused on the text of the Book of Mormon itself, looking

at how it handles the stories of its individual figures, from Nephi to Ammon to those Nephites and Lamanites who lived for two hundred years in peace. Deeply present in every essay is Rees's own testimony of the Book of Mormon and its importance in a faithful life.

This text is both devotional and academic and will be valuable to those seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the Book of Mormon through study and also through faith. It is written for faithful members of the Church, both those engaged in scholarly study of the Book of Mormon and those seeking to increase their faith. Ultimately, Rees concludes that "the primary message of the Book of Mormon from beginning to end is love" (229), and his own witness

throughout this book reinforces that assertion.

Robert A. Rees is currently Visiting Professor of Religion at Graduate Theological Union in Berkley as well as Director of Mormon Studies and has formerly taught at the University of Wisconsin, UCLA, UC Santa Cruz, UC Berkley, and Vytautas Magnus University in Lithuania. He has published extensively about the Book of Mormon, both studies and poetry, including *Proving Contraries: Essays in Honor of Eugene England* (2005); *The Reader's Book of Mormon* (2008); *Why I Stay: The Challenges of Discipleship for Contemporary Mormons* (vol. 1, 2011; vol. 2, 2021); and *Waiting for Morning* (2017).

—Lane Welch