

Review

Title: The Second Comforter: Conversing with The Lord Through the Veil

Author: Denver Snuffer

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Reviewed by Russell Y Anderson for the Association for Mormon Letters

I can remember learning about "The Second Comforter" and having "Your Calling and Election Sure" and wondered how that happened and whether it was very common. I have heard about people that have had that experience and even talked to one person. When I asked how that was achieved he basically told me to just pray for it. That wasn't a very satisfying answer. It wasn't until I read this book by Denver Snuffer that I come to appreciate more fully what is involved and the change in your life that occurs in the process.

Denver Snuffer joined the church when he was 19. The book describes some of the process of his conversion and life, but mostly it provide the foundation and tools for a person to get an audience with Christ.

Denver Snuffer provides this interesting perspective about the book from his blog entry of Feb. 12, 2010. "So I think taking only the testimony alone contradicts the whole purpose which it was written. The testimony was merely a brief, nine word ratification of the book's teachings. The focus is a manual for the reader to do that for themselves. The reader, not the author, is the focus of the book. Indeed, with only brief exceptions, my personal present intrudes into the book to highlight how to do something wrong. Then the book explains how to get it right."

And on June 2, 2010: "Study what I've written carefully and anyone will find it is all there. Several people have done so, and have received the promised results. But they took care and devoted careful, solemn and ponderous thought to the matters set out in what I have written. That is what the writings were intended to produce, and why they were commissioned to be written by the Lord. I know that the process is true, because I have lived it. I know that the descriptions provided in my writings are sufficient, because they have produced results akin to my own."

The book walks a person through the process necessary to have an audience with the Savior. The attainment of such a goal is on the Lord's timetable not ours. There are many interesting insights on the path.

One of the steps is obedience, "The interesting thing about the process is that actual light -- or enlightenment -- is acquired through obedience. It is not acquired in any other way. It is specifically not acquired by study or scholarship alone." (p. 50)

The author uses the experience of Nephi to describe the events along the path. Speaking of God, "He is not distant. He is a part of each of our daily lives. We can ignore Him, or acknowledge Him. But whether we accept or reject His involvement, Nephi's view is that He is present and concerned. . . In the end, Goliaths are merely opportunities for you to demonstrate your faith. They will be swept away when they no longer serve any purpose." (p. 75)

"Here is Nephi's list of several concrete steps which must occur for anyone to receive the things of God in vision or revelation: 1. Desiring to know, 2. Believing the Lord can make them known to you. 3. Pondering or thinking deeply and prayerfully." (p. 89)

Snuffer talks about how significant and difficult the process can be, "The first time I spoke in Fast and Testimony . . . I testified 'I know this Church is true.' at the time it would have been much more correct to say that I believed it to be true. I was a long way from knowledge. But I was fervent in my belief. I did not have any idea the difficulties and sacrifices involved in trading faith for knowledge. If I had known then, I would perhaps have stayed content with belief" (p. 100)

As indicated earlier, we have to ask, or as Snuffer says, "It is not Heaven's responsibility to force upon us answer to questions which we do not ask" (p. 111)

Because of Snuffer's experience, he can testify that this process is available for the humble Saint. "There is a notion among some Saints that these things are reserved for Church leaders holding high office. That false notion is so widespread it deserves special notice here." (p. 151)

"And so it is with these things. They can be learned, but they can't be taught. Those who are willing to receive them, however, will receive them. But only when they are prepared to respect the limits which should always separate the sacred from the profane." (p. 177)

Surprisingly you must already have faith that will not be improved by a visit from the Savior before you are ready for a Second Comforter experience. "When your faith in His ordinances is secure enough that seeing Him will produce no further conviction of His word, no greater confidence in Him and no additional confirmation than what you have already, you are prepared to receive Him. . . If your faith would increase because of this experience, you are not ready for it. The Second Comforter comes to confirm the faith which already resides in a person, not to produce that faith." (p. 266)

Even though this is a marvelous spiritual experience, the individual still feels totally inadequate. "But what is relevant here, and so very important, is that those feelings of inadequacy do have great value. Feelings of inferiority, or of not quite belonging, or of being less than you should be, all lead to the essential humility needed for the next step. (p. 309)

Getting the opportunity to converse with the Lord, brings with it an exposure to Satan. "Because of these things, the path to heaven runs through hell. You don't get the epiphany without confronting Satan." (p. 348) He also mentions that the reason it is called "The Second Comforter" is that you need comfort after confronting Satan.

Even after such a marvelous experience, you still participate in the normal mortal activities. "The Second Comforter never has and never will remove life's difficulties. Life will continue much the same as it did before, although the challenges may become greater." (p. 387)

I find particularly interesting, Snuffer's attempt to describe the experience of being in the presence of

the Lord, "Here is yet another (my) attempt: His love will crush you. It will overwhelm and intimidate you. It will bring you involuntarily to your knees in adoration and humility. It is not possible to feel love of this kind from Him and remain aloof of confessing, as Moses did: 'Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.' (Moses 1:10)" (p. 391)

We find the reason why this book was written in a footnote on page 396: "If the author had not been asked to write this work, the author's own experience would have remained a private matter, as it was for years before writing of this book."

Finally as promised we get his short testimony of his encounter with the Lord. "He is the Second Comforter. I know He lives, for I have seen Him. He has ministered to me" A footnote is included with this testimony: "The full content of these things are of course personal, never intended for public display, and not needed as a part of this text. This is about bearing testimony of the process itself and the already declared doctrines. I am adding my weak voice to those of others who proclaim this to be true. This is not about personal matters, the revelation of which would amount to improperly profaning the sacred, nor is it about preaching any new doctrines, which is altogether inappropriate." (p. 405)

One final quote from the book: "The overwhelming majority of us will, ten minutes after death, regret we did not do more with this second estate. Our regrets will be because we did not seek more earnestly, pray more devoutly, fast more frequently, and gain a greater measure of truth and light than we gained here. Change that for yourself." (p. 424)

As you can see this isn't just a book "about" The Second Comforter, but a book about the process of making ourselves ready to approach God. I found it very exciting and revealing of the process and what is required in our own lives if we wish for such an experience. It is much more than just desiring to confront God, but it is a process of changing our lives so that we become more like the Savior. (1 John 3:2) It is a difficult journey, but oh so rewarding. Not just in the opportunity to see and experience the Savior, but also in the growth and development of our own souls.