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The Foundation for
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INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1992, No. 4

"...by study and also by faith." D & C 88:118

July

Review Does It Again—Offers Careful Analyses, and Pulls No Punches

F.A.R.M.S. has published the fourth volume of its annual *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, edited by Daniel C. Peterson.

Like previous issues, this fourth volume contains reviews and review essays dealing with books on the Book of Mormon published in the past year. Some of these essays go beyond reviewing to offer original insights into the Book of Mormon, making them important contributions to Book of Mormon research in their own right.

Reviewers examine such publications as Avraham Gileadi's *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon* and the third volume of Joseph Fielding McConkie's and Robert L. Millet's *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*. Other books covered include a survey by the late Paul Cheesman of certain evidence for pre-Columbian contacts between the Old and New Worlds and a recent attempt to link southwestern American Indian rock art with the Book of Mormon.

Once again, anti-Mormon and non-Mormon writings also receive serious attention. Stephen D. Ricks

and John A. Tvedtnes, for instance, examine Wesley Walters's *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon*, while Matt Roper weighs the treatment of the Book of Mormon in Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* John Gee critiques an assault on the book of Abraham by Charles Larson that has recently been sent, unsolicited, to thousands of Latter-day Saint homes. John L. Sorenson and Diane Wirth evaluate the discussion of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon provided in Stephen Williams's *Fantastic Archaeology: The Wild Side of North American Prehistory*.

The *Review* looks at lighter works as well, such as Chris Heimerdinger's popular novel, *Gadiantons and the Silver Sword*, Robert Marcum's *Dominions of the Gadiantons*, and Keith Terry's Book of Mormon intellectual detective story, *Out of Darkness*. Several devotional and practical studies of the Book of Mormon offer reviewers an opportunity to comment on the Nephite record's deep relevance to modern, everyday life.

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BYU Today Publishes Article on Critical Text Project

The May 1992 issue of *BYU Today* carried a very good summary of the project that Royal Skousen, professor of English at BYU, is conducting to produce a critical text of the Book of Mormon. The main purposes of this project are to establish the original English language text of the Book of Mormon, to the extent that it can be discovered, and to determine the history of the text—in particular, the changes that the text has undergone, both editorial and accidental.

Those who have been following this project with interest may want to see this article, which is available as a reprint on the enclosed order form.

The article was written by Skousen himself, making it the most up-to-date and accurate summary available. It is well written and illustrated—an easy and convenient way to introduce this project to others.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to the study of ancient scripture. Your tax-deductible contributions enable F.A.R.M.S. to sponsor and coordinate a wide range of research projects that enhance our understanding of these sacred writings.

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F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

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New Light on the Shining Stones of the Jaredites

THE PREPARATION OF LIGHT SOURCES for the Jaredite barges has long been an enigma to Book of Mormon readers. The Lord indicated the impracticality of using normal sources of light, saying, "Ye cannot have windows, for they will be dashed in pieces; neither shall ye take fire with you, for ye shall not go by the light of fire. . . . Therefore *what will ye* that I should prepare for you that ye may have light?" (Ether 2:23, 25).

In response, the brother of Jared "did molten out of a rock sixteen small stones; and they were white and clear, even as transparent glass" (Ether 3:1). Placing them before the Lord, he petitioned, "Touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness . . . that we may have light while we shall cross the sea" (Ether 3:4). By touching the stones, the Lord somehow changed them, causing them to emit a light bright enough to illuminate the inside of the barges.

The physical oddity of such a source of illumination, however, has been a cause for considerable ridicule for the Book of Mormon. Comments such as the following are typical:

The story of Ether's stone candles overtakes the marvelous. . . . and these sixteen stone candles gave light for eight vessels while crossing the ocean to America. Who is eager to believe this story? Shall we believe it simply because we cannot disprove it? They say there is a "man on the moon," and that "the moon is made of green

cheese," and we cannot disprove it—shall we therefore believe it? (William Sheldon, *Mormonism Examined* [Brodhead, WI: By the Author, 1876], pp. 139-40.)

More recently Weldon Langfield expressed his opinion of the shining stones: "The words 'patently ridiculous' seem too kind" (*The Truth About Mormonism* [Bakersfield, CA: Weldon Langfield Publications, 1991], p. 45). Many critics completely dismissed the Book of Mormon because they could not believe that such a light source was physically feasible.

Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico have recently developed radioluminescent lights that invite some interesting comparisons with the Jaredite stones. These lights are intended to "serve needs for lighting where no electricity is readily available" (SNL News Release, p. 1). Their life expectancy is about 20 years and they are described as being "bright" and very "intense."

The radioluminescent lights are made from a highly porous silica matrix—"aerogel"—in which a phosphor such as zinc sulfide is dispersed. The radioactive source of the lights is tritium gas, which when incorporated into the aerogel, actually becomes chemically bonded to the aerogel matrix (*ibid.*, p. 3). The radioactivity of tritium results in beta decay. The beta particles (electrons) "permeate through the open spaces of the aerogel and strike the phosphor particles, exciting them and causing them to emit light" (*ibid.*). The majority of the light emitted escapes to the outside, whereas the beta radiation is contained inside the matrix.

Therefore there is no appreciable external radiation.

Radioluminescent light is consistent with and supplies an intriguing parallel matching the requirements of the Jaredite stones: they are small, long-lasting, and physically harmless. It is possible that the Jaredite stones were created in a similar fashion, according to existing physical laws. Although making the molten rocks would most likely have boiled off any tritium present, it is conceivable that the Lord could have altered some other molecule in the stone to create the radioactive isotope that would produce the glowing effect. It is also possible that he could have simply infused the stones with tritium gas as the Sandia researchers have done. Interestingly, years ago Elder Spencer W. Kimball proposed that perhaps the Jaredite stones were illuminated "with radium or some other substance not yet rediscovered by our scientists" (*Ensign*, Apr. 1963, pp. 63-64).

Of course we can only speculate about the process that led to the Jaredite lights, and even the Sandia researchers are quick to caution that scientific knowledge about radioluminescent lights is still in the early stages of development. Future discoveries and further developments may more closely illuminate the manner in which the molten Jaredite stones were caused to fluoresce, but for now this latest development certainly helps us appreciate that the Book of Mormon refers to realities we are only now rediscovering.

Based on research by Nicholas Read, Jae R. Ballif, John W. Welch, Bill Evenson, Kathleen Reynolds, and Matt Roper.

F.A.R.M.S. Brown Bag Seminar Presents On-going Research

Approximately twice each month during the Fall and Winter Semesters at BYU, the Foundation sponsors informal brown bag lectures in which BYU faculty and others discuss their research on topics related to the Book of Mormon. All members of the BYU community and other interested persons are invited to attend, free of charge.

During the 1991-1992 school year the brown bag presentations featured some very interesting and important work in progress. In September, John Gee, a F.A.R.M.S. researcher who will pursue a doctorate in Egyptology, discussed Isaiah in the Book of Mormon. Gee argued that Isaiah is a poet on a par with Shakespeare. He also illustrated a typical pattern of the use of Isaiah by the Nephite prophets, in which they introduce, quote, interpret, and conclude by again quoting (see 2 Nephi 6). The use and interpretation of Isaiah not only helped the Nephite prophets teach their people but also makes the Book of Mormon a better witness for the Old Testament.

In the next presentation, John W. Welch announced and described a new monograph series, *Ancient Texts and Mormon Studies*, that F.A.R.M.S. will sponsor to provide texts, translations, notes, and commentary from an LDS perspective for ancient texts of particular interest to members of the Church.

In October Lyndon Cook discussed David Whitmer's witness of the Book of Mormon. He argued that Whitmer's testimony was based primarily on sense experiences rather than on anything transcendental and that miracles were very important to him. Cook also examined the circumstances that led to the rift between Whitmer and

Joseph Smith.

Royal Skousen gave the group an update on his work on the critical text of the Book of Mormon. The most exciting news was his discovery of new fragments of the original manuscript and the process required to separate and examine these water-damaged fragments (later reported in the F.A.R.M.S. Update in the Jan. 1992 *Insights* and the May 1992 *BYU Today*; see order form). He also discussed over 200 previously unknown changes made in the manuscripts, most made when the printer's manuscript was created by copying from the original manuscript. The eventual publication of Skousen's work in a four-volume set promises to be a milestone in Book of Mormon research.

Stephen Ricks made a presentation concerning a fragment of papyrus found in Egypt that is written in Demotic Egyptian script, but the underlying language expressed by that script is actually Aramaic. The significance of this combination of languages for the Book of Mormon was discussed in the F.A.R.M.S. Update in the March 1992 *Insights*.

On November 20 Warren Aston, visiting from Australia, discussed the progress and significance of his research in the Arabian Peninsula on locations that may be part of Lehi's trail, specifically Nahom and Bountiful. Some of his findings had been presented in the past on his behalf by other people associated with F.A.R.M.S., but this was the first opportunity for many seminar regulars to listen to and question Aston directly.

In January John Gee reported on references to Abraham in post-Christian Egyptian papyri—and on walls, grave stones, and lead plates. This was a follow-up to an article in

the September 1991 *Insights*. Gee discussed his methods of research and interpretation, pointed out the growing number of references to Abraham that his research is uncovering, and expressed the preliminary conclusion that these references might eventually constitute circumstantial evidence to support the book of Abraham.

John Sorenson reported his current research on metals in Mesoamerica. The current paradigm for understanding the existence of metals in that region is that none were used there until they were introduced from South America about A.D. 900. Yet Sorenson has amassed what he believes is sufficient evidence to challenge that paradigm, including archaeological and linguistic evidence (see the May 1992 *Insights*).

John Tvedtnes next made a presentation titled "The House of Jethro: A History of the Kenites." He discussed the term *Kenite*, applied to Jethro (the father-in-law of Moses) in the Bible, which means "metalsmith" (and sometimes "musician"). He also examined the question of Jethro's priesthood, using D&C 84:6, Midrashic stories, Mishnaic and Talmudic interpretations, and the studies of a number of other scholars.

Chauncey Riddle illuminated examples of words in the Book of Mormon that may confuse or mislead a contemporary reader because the words do not mean what the reader might at first think, such as "looking beyond the mark," "innocent blood," "prosper in the land," and "the house of Israel." Riddle argued that a careful reading of the text and its context can reveal what such words meant to the writers of

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Brown Bag

the Book of Mormon and what they should mean to us; for example, he argued that "innocent blood" refers not to the blood of someone who is innocent of sin but to the blood of Christ and his priesthood representatives, and that "prosper in the land" refers not only to material prosperity but more importantly to the opportunity to come unto Christ and enter into his rest.

Samuel the Lamanite's use of laments as a poetic form was the subject of a presentation by Kent Brown. See the article on page 5 of this Newsletter for detail. Brown's paper on this subject is available on the order form with this issue.

Randall Spackman's presentation on March 25 focused on Book of Mormon calendar systems and the prophecy of Lehi that the Messiah would be born 600 years after Lehi and his family left Jerusalem. Spackman analyzed the ways in which the Nephites may have reckoned time, which may help us to understand how Lehi's prophecy fits the historical record.

The next presentation featured Brett Holbrook's discussion of the sword of Laban's symbolic similarities to kingly and heroic swords in biblical literature, suggesting a wider range of possible meanings that the sword may have had to the Nephite people.

In May Roger Barrus, from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, discussed the "Political Theology of the Book of Mormon." He focused on what he sees as the Book of Mormon's portrayal of a conflict between reason and revelation. He believes that the book teaches us by giving us vicarious experiences of the revealed way of happiness and of its opposite. He

pointed to the forceful portrayal of villains who are allowed to put forward their moral principles, which exclude the atonement, without reasoned refutation; instead of refutation, the bad results of accepting their moral principles are shown.

Next John Gee presented a paper on "Limhi in the Library" in which he pointed out that Limhi's statements follow formulas familiar from the ancient world and quote extensively from Zeniff and Abinadi. Limhi's familiarity with previous writings and his relatively passive role in matters of state led

Gee to conclude that Limhi may have been more comfortable in the library than in the throne room and that his righteousness (despite his father's wicked example) may stem from his seriousness about studying scripture.

The final presentation of the 1991-1992 school year was Fred Nelson's detailed analysis of "The History of Obsidian Trade in Mesoamerica." The patterns of trade he described may someday help us to understand contacts between the Book of Mormon peoples and others.

Continued from page 1

Fourth Annual Review Published

The *Review* also features a comprehensive bibliography of books and articles related to the Book of Mormon published during the preceding year—an indispensable tool for serious research on the subject.

As always, the coverage is wide. Since 1988 the continuing goal of the *Review* has been to take account of every book—friendly or hostile, deeply significant or not—published about the Book of Mormon. The *Review* draws attention to things of value in these books, points out problems, and even warns readers of books to be avoided.

The hope of those who put the *Review* together has been both to recognize and encourage good work and to offer thoughtful advice to readers in allocating their valuable time and money.

The reviewers possess a broad range of background and training. Representing such diverse fields as Egyptology, Germanic linguistics, biblical studies, English literature, Arabic, Mesoamerican art history, anthropology, political science, classics, and medicine, they are affiliated with a wide variety of institutions, including (besides BYU) Brown, Harvard, the State University of New York, UCLA, the University of Utah, and Western Michigan University.

The *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* has been well-received, establishing itself as a unique forum for stimulating writing on the Book of Mormon and as a highly valuable reference work. It should be of interest to all serious students of the Book of Mormon.

F.A.R.M.S.-Sponsored "Chicken Project" Will Be Published Soon

A 1989 F.A.R.M.S. research grant to Dr. George F. Carter of Texas A&M University has yielded a book manuscript entitled *Sacrificial Birds of the American Southwest: Chicken, Eagle, Turkey, Macaw*, which is being considered for publication by a university press. Some of the ideas discussed by the eight (non-LDS) contributors are significant in relation to the Book of Mormon's report of voyages across the oceans from the Old to the New World.

It has long been an article of faith among comparative zoologists and archaeologists working with pre-Spanish remains from the Americas that the domestic chicken was not present anywhere in the Western Hemisphere until the Spanish brought these fowls some 500 years ago. Yet early explorers found chickens in remote places like Amazonia only a few years after the first Spanish birds arrived on the coast. Moreover, some of the chickens found were strange types—for example, birds laying blue eggs—that were quite unknown in Spain or the Mediterranean world but familiar in southern Asia.

Then decades ago Carter learned by word of mouth that some archaeologists had found chicken bones in pre-Columbian strata but had put them aside without including them in their reports because they were considered "impossible."

The F.A.R.M.S.-funded "Chicken Project" set out to pin down what concrete data could be gleaned about the matter. John Kilgore has searched the earliest documents, including Columbus's discovery on the island of Jamaica in 1502 of "very large chickens with

feathers like wool." The only known bird fitting this description was the "frizzle fowl" known only in China at that time. Carl Johannessen recaps extensive research on the ceremonial uses of Asiatic-type chickens in native communities of Central and South America.

Other contributors discuss the history of the various races of chickens in the Old World, fowl whose bones are intermingled with pottery fragments that absolutely date long before 1492. Charmion McKusick, the premier expert on fowl identification in the Southwest, joins with Carter to document pre-Columbian chicken bones at Hohokam sites in Arizona (in the A.D. 1000s) and at Pecos, Taos, and Casas Grandes in Chihuahua. At least two pre-European types are evident. The type from the Hohokam area has bones like those from Easter Island in eastern Polynesia. Remains from Pecos and Taos date later and are indistinguishable from Red Jungle fowl of southeast Asia.

Carter summarizes the significance of these findings for the question of transoceanic voyaging to the Americas before Columbus: "We are looking at the [pre-Columbian] carriage from Asia to the New World of not only varied races of chickens but also of whole sets of accompanying rituals and beliefs. The chicken cannot be independently invented, it cannot fly the Pacific, and if it did, it could not teach the native Americans how to use it in ritual, sacrifice, and prayer."

When the volume is published, F.A.R.M.S. will inform its readers who may wish to obtain it.

Was Samuel the Lamanite a Poet?

S. Kent Brown, professor of ancient scripture at BYU, has recently completed a study of "The Prophetic Laments of Samuel the Lamanite," available as a F.A.R.M.S. paper. His comparison of Helaman 13 with the poetic form of biblical laments offers a number of intriguing insights into both the form and meaning of Samuel's message for the Nephites and for us.

While not all of the elements of biblical laments are present in Samuel's laments, his laments are sufficiently similar to the biblical form to make it fruitful to consider them in that light.

Brown believes that Samuel is a poet: one of his two laments seems to be quoted from a hymn, but the other seems to be Samuel's own composition. Brown's paper is available on the order form with this issue.

Reynolds Leaves for Israel

Noel Reynolds, president of F.A.R.M.S., will spend the next year at the BYU Jerusalem Center. Stephen Ricks, immediate past president and current chairman of the board of directors, will serve as acting president to assist Reynolds.

Reynolds will continue to serve on the board of directors and will resume his full duties as president of the Foundation when he returns to Provo in the summer of 1993.

Scholar Watch

Stephen E. Robinson, chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU, has been named an Assistant Editor of a monograph series published by the *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*. He also delivered a paper in June at an international symposium in Jerusalem on "Jewish Leaders in the Land before 1970." The symposium was chaired by Mayor Teddy Kollek. Others who made presentations at the symposium included James Charlesworth, W. D. Davies, and David Flusser.

Paul Y. Hoskisson's doctoral dissertation on "The Deities and Cult Terms in Mari: An Analysis of the Textual Evidence" is available

in a bound facsimile edition from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan. It examines the role of prophets and religious terminology in the royal court in an early Mesopotamian site. It gives valuable information about the religious environment of the early Israelites in the patriarchal period.

Fred Woods, director of the Boulder, Colorado, LDS Institute of Religion, has completed his dissertation on the use of water and storm metaphors in the polemical language of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic history. It has been accepted for publication by publisher Peter Lang of New York. Woods finds that water and storm metaphors were used as a device to launch a literary attack against the god of water and storm, Baal

Hadad. This literature portrays Yahweh as the high god through his divine ability to control various aspects of water and storm, implying his ability to guide and provide for all aspects of life.

Donald W. Parry has recently earned his Ph.D. with honors from the University of Utah in Middle East Studies-Hebrew. His dissertation, "The Significance of Graded Temple Space: The Temple of Herod Model," is available in a bound facsimile edition from University Microfilms International. Using the Temple of Herod as a model, Parry deals with such concepts as gradations of holiness, the nature of sacred space, the purpose of temple architecture, and the hierarchical organization of Israelite society within the temple complex.

TV Stations In California and Oregon Broadcast Hugh Nibley's Book of Mormon Class

Last year, with a generous grant from Geneva Steel Corporation, F.A.R.M.S. was able to prepare for broadcast on TV Dr. Hugh Nibley's Honors Book of Mormon class, filmed by BYU Continuing Education under the inspiration and monitoring of F.A.R.M.S. 1989 director Russell Peek.

Since January these classes have been seen through most of Utah and southern and eastern Idaho on KBYU-TV every Sunday evening at 5:00, and they will continue in that time slot for the rest of 1992.

Starting in March, Dimension Cable in Orange County, California, also began broadcasting the classes. This station airs the program on Monday evenings at 8:00.

The Portland, Oregon, Institute of Religion, through Brian Smith, has arranged to have the classes

broadcast on several cable stations throughout the Portland area, scheduled to begin late in June. Ward and stake leaders in the area will receive notice of the schedule or may call the institute.

Broadcast tapes are now being prepared for stations in San Diego, Ventura, and Sacramento, California. Broadcasts may begin as early as mid-July. Ward and stake

leaders in the broadcast areas will receive information. The broadcasts are being coordinated by Robert McGraw in San Diego, Donald Houle in Ventura, and David and Debra Werdon in Sacramento.

If you want to arrange for broadcast of these outstanding classes in your area, call the F.A.R.M.S. office and we will try to accommodate your request.

Second Semester Tapes and Transcripts Now Ready

Tapes and transcripts of the second semester of Hugh Nibley's Honors Book of Mormon class are now available. See the order form.

The materials for the first semester have been very popular,

and many readers have asked for the second semester. We regret the delay. The process of preparing the transcripts accurately is quite time consuming. We hope that you find them worth waiting for.