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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1991, No. 3

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

May

## 1991 Review Examines 17 New Books on the Book of Mormon

The third volume of the annual F.A.R.M.S. *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* is now available for purchase.

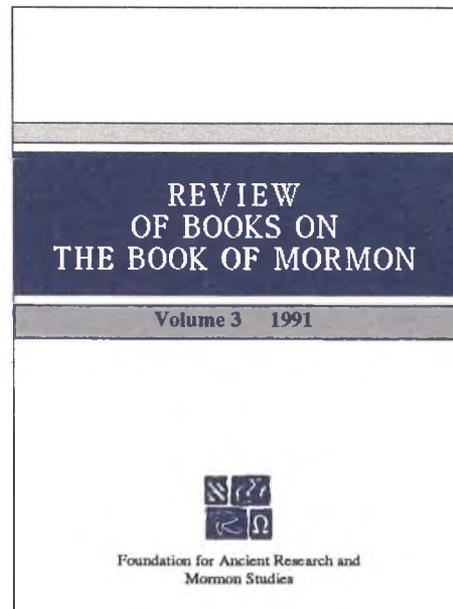
Edited by Daniel C. Peterson, Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic at BYU, this newest issue of the much-praised Review represents the efforts of more than twenty contributors from various disciplines and diverse backgrounds.

"The Review is designed to guide readers to the best works being published on the Book of Mormon," says Dan Peterson. "We also try to warn readers against shoddy work and fallacious arguments where they occur."

As in the two previously published volumes, several of the reviews themselves are likely to be recognized as important essays in Book of Mormon scholarship.

Among the works discussed are Joseph L. Allen's *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, George A. Horton, Jr.'s *Keys to Successful Scripture Study*, and John W. Welch's *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the*

*Mount*, plus a work that a reviewer thinks may be "the worst book ever published on the Book of Mormon." Two reviewers examine Dan Vogel's anthology,



*The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture.* Of Vogel's work Stephen Robinson says, "Korihor's back, and this time he's got a printing press."

In addition, two reviewers,

one an expert on classical Chinese historiography and the other a retired career soldier, respond to the recent F.A.R.M.S. publication of papers dealing with *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, edited by Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin.

Expressly anti-Mormon works are also considered, including Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon* and a recent attempt to breathe life into the early affidavits against Joseph Smith.

Like the two earlier volumes, this issue of the Review contains an exhaustive bibliography of articles and books published on the Book of Mormon during the past year. Serious students of the Book of Mormon will find this bibliography invaluable.

Also included in this issue of the Review is the illustrated text of Allen J. Christenson's 1991 F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture, "Maya Harvest Festivals and the Book of Mormon."

Limited quantities of the previous two volumes of the Review are also still available.

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

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 76

May 1991

## Concrete Evidence for the Book of Mormon

Helaman 3:7-11 reports that Nephite dissenters began moving from the land of Zarahemla into the land northward where they began building with cement. "The people who went forth became exceedingly expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement," as well as "all manner of their buildings" and many cities "both of wood and of cement." The Book of Mormon dates this significant technological advance to the year 46 B.C.

Recent research shows that cement was in fact used in Mesoamerica beginning at this time. One of the most notable uses of cement is in the temple complex at Teotihuacan, north of present-day Mexico City (see photo). According to David S. Hyman, the use of cement appears suddenly in the archaeological record. Its earliest sample "is a fully developed product." Where it came from remains obscure. The cement floor slabs at this site "were re-

markably high in structural quality"; although exposed to the elements for nearly 2000 years, they still "exceed many present-day building code requirements" (*A Study of the Calcareous Cements in Prehispanic Mesoamerican Building Construction* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ., 1970], pp. ii, 6-7).

After its discovery, cement was used at many sites in the Valley of Mexico and in the Maya regions of southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. It was used in the construction of buildings at such sites as Cerro de Texcotzingo, Tula, Palenque, Tikal, Copan, Uxmal, and Chichen Itza. Further, the use of cement "is a Maya habit, absent from non-Maya examples of corbelled vaulting from the south-eastern United States to southern South America" (George Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America* [Baltimore: Penguin, 1975], p. 201).

Mesoamerican cement was almost exclusively lime cement. The limestone

was purified on a "cylindrical pile of timber, which requires a vast amount of labor to cut and considerable skill to construct in such a way that combustion of the stone and wood is complete and a minimum of impurities remain in the product" (Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *An Album of Maya Architecture* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963], p. xv). The fact that very little carbon is found in this cement "attests to the ability of these ancient peoples" (Hyman, p. 6-5).

John Sorenson further noted the expert sophistication in the use of cement at El Tajin, east of Mexico City, after Book of Mormon times. Cement roofs covered areas of 75 square meters! "Sometimes the builders filled a room with stones and mud, smoothed the surface on top to receive the concrete, then removed the interior fill when the [slab] on top had dried" ("Digging Into the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* 14 [October 1984]: 18).

The presence of expert cement technology in prehispanic Mesoamerica is a remarkable archaeological fact. Cement first appears in Mesoamerican architecture very close to the time when the Book of Mormon says this development occurred. It is also a significant factor in locating the Book of Mormon lands of Zarahemla and Desolation, for Zarahemla must be south of areas where cement was used as early as the middle of the first century B.C. Until samples of cement are found outside of the southwest areas of North America, one may reasonably assume that Book of Mormon lands were not far to the south of these sites where early cement is found.

Based on research by Matthew G. Wells and John W. Welch.



## Collected Updates of 1990 Highlight Recent Research

The F.A.R.M.S. Updates for 1990 have been collected and are available as a set on the order form in this issue. These updates give brief reports on some of the most interesting Book of Mormon research currently being conducted. They are the quickest and most direct way to keep up-to-date on research in progress.

In the January Update John Sorenson gives some perspective on recent reports of discoveries about ancient American civilizations. He evaluates some recent reports and gives cautious conclusions about their likely authenticity. But he points out reasons that responsible scholars may not know for some time the quality of many purported finds.

Interesting points of Nephite and Israelite law raised in the trial of Seantum (in Helaman 7-8) are the subject of another update. Unwitnessed murders like this one posed special problems under the law of Moses' two-witness rule. The update discusses three exceptional conditions that could override the two-witness requirement and shows that all three were present in the case of Nephi's prophecy and Seantum's self-confession to the murder of the chief judge.

Another update, based on research by Louis Midgley, shows the importance given in the Book of Mormon to remembering. Just as faith looks forward in Christ to actualize the present power of his redemption, so remembrance looks back on covenants and gifts from God and keeps the past alive. The update shows that, both in Hebrew usage and in the Book of Mormon, remembering must include action—the faithful response to the terms of the covenant.

The April Update discusses how the expression "this day" is used in the Book of Mormon with special religious and legal meaning. It apparently marked the covenantal and legal status of a holy day, just as similar expressions did in Hebrew.

So when King Benjamin uses this expression five times at ritual and covenantal high points in his speech, it appears that he is using the phrase not as a mere literary embellishment, but as an important marker of the renewal of the covenant on a holy day.

Cardinal directions in Hebrew, Egyptian, and Nephite languages are the subject of another update, based on research by William J. Hamblin. The update explores how the Nephites, using "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians," might have written *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west*. This is an important question that bears on efforts to correlate the cities and regions mentioned in the Book of Mormon with the geography of the Americas. The update examines Hebrew and Egyptian usage that might have influenced the Nephites and concludes that directions were

not expressed by ancient civilizations in the same way they are by modern peoples, and that directions in the Book of Mormon may fit the geography of Mesoamerica in ways that would have made perfect sense to the ancients.

Other updates address the possible relationships between our calendar and the Nephite calendar, the use of colophons in the Book of Mormon to introduce or summarize passages, the effect of Mormon's editing on the book, the use of antithetical parallels in the Book of Mormon to force mental comparison of opposed but related ideas, and the ways that the Book of Mormon fits a heavenly book motif evident in the Bible, other ancient Near Eastern literature, and early Christian writings.

These informative and interesting reports will be a valuable addition to your own research collection.

### Tours to Mesoamerica Announced

F.A.R.M.S. is sponsoring two tours to the lands of the Book of Mormon in Mexico and Guatemala. This is a great opportunity for you to visit the lands and sites that most likely were the setting for most of the Book of Mormon, with other F.A.R.M.S. subscribers who share your interests and with commentary provided by a member of the F.A.R.M.S. board of directors, who will accompany the tour as guest lecturer. The tour will be led by Joseph Allen.

Participants will visit the ruins at Kaminaljuyu (perhaps the city of Nephi) beautiful Lake Atitlan (possibly the waters of Mormon), and numerous other sites that can be identified as likely remains of

the Nephite and Jaredite civilizations. Visits to the Mexican National Museum of Anthropology and the pyramids of Teotihuacan plus optional temple sessions in Mexico City and Guatemala are also included in the itinerary.

Departure dates are November 5, 1991, and February 4, 1992. The tours will last about two weeks and cost approximately \$2995 per person. A deposit of \$200 per person will reserve your place.

If you are interested in joining us on one of these tours, please check the appropriate box on the order form and send the form to us soon.

## ORDER FORM

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S&T-91	Sorenson, John L., and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., <i>Rediscovering the Book of Mormon</i> , 292 pp., F.A.R.M.S. & Deseret Book, paperback. If you purchase ten or more, use these prices: \$8.25, \$7.00 (-15%), or \$6.60 (-20%)		\$8.95 \$7.60 (-15%) \$7.15 (-20%)	
NWF-91	Stocker, Terry, ed., <i>New World Figurine Project</i> , vol. 1, 178 pp., Research Press		\$23.00	
REV-88	Peterson, Daniel C., ed., <i>Review of Books on the Book of Mormon</i> , vol. 1 (1989), 156 pp.		\$5.00	
REV-89	Peterson, Daniel C., ed., <i>Review of Books on the Book of Mormon</i> , vol. 2 (1990), 302 pp., includes 1990 F.A.R.M.S. Annual Lecture on the Book of Mormon		\$7.00	

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## Staff Members Change Duties

Recently it has been necessary to make some changes in the responsibilities of members of our staff. We want to let you know about these changes so that you will know whom to contact when you have business to conduct with F.A.R.M.S.

Don Parry has taken on major responsibility for the Book of Mormon bibliography project, mentioned in our last Newsletter, so he has relinquished his duties as Office Manager in order to devote more time to that assignment and to his own Ph.D. dissertation. Don continues as the Research Manager for F.A.R.M.S.

We want to thank Don for all his efforts as Office Manager. His diligence and good humor have kept the office running smoothly. He has worked with the office staff to make improvements in the way we process and fill orders, and he has created much good will for the Foundation through his prompt and accurate answering of questions, both operational and scholarly, that come into the office.

Brent Hall has now serves as Office Manager, in addition to continuing as Director of Development. He has taken up where Don left off in trying to make the office operate efficiently. He has improved our use of computers in the office, especially for record keeping and order fulfillment, with equipment that he helped acquire from donors and that was given to F.A.R.M.S. by IBM thanks to Russell Peek. He has also worked to streamline our handling of inventory, including a physical reorganization of part of the office.

These changes are intended to help us serve you better. We welcome your suggestions on our operations: you are an important part of the Foundation.

## What Does the F.A.R.M.S. Logo Mean?

Recently, a number of new subscribers have inquired about the meaning of the Foundation's logo. We hope that the following brief explanation will answer your questions.

The logo of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is composed of characters from four of the main ancient languages and cultures relevant to Book of Mormon research. The Hebrew "aleph" in the upper left and the Greek "omega" in the lower right are the first and last letters of their alphabets respectively, standing for "the first and the last" (Isaiah 48:12), who is Jesus Christ.

The Mayan glyph in the upper right is stylized, representing



Mesoamerican studies. The Egyptian "Wd3t-eye" in the lower left was an ancient symbol of resurrection, since a myth told how the eye was torn into pieces and put back together. It

also has a connection with the Book of Mormon, since the "pieces" of this eye were used by the Egyptians as binary fractional mathematical symbols used for their grain measures, reminiscent of the

weights and measures of the Nephites in Alma 11. The round pupil of the eye was also used as the round outline of the hypocephali the Egyptians used in burials, of which Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham is an example.

## Referrals Always Welcome

Since you are enjoying the benefits of your involvement with F.A.R.M.S., it is likely that some of the people you know might also like to receive this Newsletter. You are our best means of reaching new people with the information and the services that the Foundation can provide. Please send us the names of your friends who you think might be interested in the work of the Foundation. We will send an introductory packet to each person whose name you send us. This material explains F.A.R.M.S. and extends an invitation to subscribe.

We keep our mailing list strictly in-house, so the names you refer will not be used for any other purpose.

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## New Paper Issued on Priesthood in the Book of Mosiah

Daniel C. Peterson has recently completed a study of what the book of Mosiah reveals about priesthood among the Nephites. His paper on the subject is now available through F.A.R.M.S.

The paper surveys all references to priesthood and authority in the book of Mosiah. Peterson finds there a rich, complex, and consistent view of the subject. He finds among the Nephites of that time a rather different organization of priesthood than

that to which we are accustomed in our own day.

In his view, the book of Mosiah suggests that Nephite priesthood was structured on the basis of family and kinship ties for the first several centuries of Book of Mormon history, becoming tied to a "church" only at the time of Alma the Elder. In the earlier period, the monarchy appears itself to have functioned as a kind of priesthood office. Thus, Peterson believes that when a rela-

tively independent ecclesiastical organization was established among the Nephites, new questions about authority and discipline also arose, culminating in the revelation to Alma the Elder of rules and practices, including excommunication.

The paper also examines two recently published analyses of the doctrine of the priesthood in the Book of Mormon, finding them unconvincing.

## Christenson Gives F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture

On February 27 Dr. Allen J. Christenson presented the fourth annual F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon lecture, entitled "Maya Harvest Festivals and the Book of Mormon."

Dr. Christenson's presentation was based on his years of research into contemporary and ancient Highland Maya religious festivals. He also has broad experience with the Mayan language, both as a freelance anthropological researcher in Guatemala and as a translator for the Church.

Christenson examined the Maya New Year's harvest festival and the imagery associated with it. Throughout the history of the Maya, who dominated southern Mesoamerica, the most important public festival of the year was timed to coincide with the main corn harvest in mid-November. For the most part, this festival also served as the New Year's Day of the solar calendar, when kingship was renewed.

During this festival, the Maya celebrated their belief that their gods offered themselves as blood atonement to preserve the world, and then were resurrected. Christenson gave particular attention to the symbolic treatments of the evil god Mam; the ritual descent of the king, as representative of the god of life and



resurrection, into the underworld; the king's ritual conflict with and defeat of the lords of the underworld (and of death); and the king's triumphant return or resurrection. He also discussed the use that the Maya made of the image of the tree of life in connection with these ideas of atonement and resurrection. He illustrated his presentation with numerous slides.

"Many of these motifs," he concluded, "may have originated in the teachings of Nephite and Lamanite prophets who centered their teachings on Christ as the only true God of life and resurrection." In this light, he discussed how the descendants of these people incorporated their belief

in Christ, adopted since the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, into their harvest festival. If these ancient beliefs of the Maya did stem from teachings about Christ, then it is appropriate that their descendants years later "readily adopted Christ as their life God, whose history had long been familiar to their ancient predecessors."

Dr. Christenson's lecture is printed with illustrations in volume 3 of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, available on the order form in this issue.

*"To be known, the truth must be stated, and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true. . . . This must ever be the chief source of evidence for the Book of Mormon. All other evidence is secondary to this, the primary and infallible. . . . Secondary evidences in support of truth, like secondary causes in natural phenomena, may be of first-rate importance."*

B. H. Roberts