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## Insights, Vol. 15, No. 6 (December 1995)

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The Newsletter of  
the Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

## AN ANCIENT WINDOW

December 1995

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

## Nibley Fellowships Support the Education of Six Promising Young Scholars

Hugh W. Nibley Fellowships for the 1995–1996 academic year have been announced by FARMS. Awards have been made to continue support for the two recipients of the fellowship for 1994–1995, Gaye Strathearn and John Gee, and to assist four new Nibley Fellows: Anthony Rivera Jr., Allen J. Christenson, Carl Griffin, and Frank F. Judd Jr.

Gaye Strathearn is beginning her third year of a Ph.D. program in New Testament Studies at Claremont Graduate School, and John Gee is completing work on his dissertation in Egyptology in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Yale University.

Anthony Rivera has begun a Ph.D. program in Biblical Hebrew in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. Allen Christenson is in his second year of an M.A. program in Pre-Columbian Art History in the Department of Art History at the University of Texas at Austin.

Carl Griffin is beginning the first year of an M.A. program in the Department of Early Christian Studies at the Catholic Uni-

versity of America. Frank Judd has begun a Ph.D. program in New Testament and Early Christianity in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The foundation is pleased to be able to assist these promising students in the name of Hugh

Nibley, to honor his contributions to LDS scholarship. The recipients, the Nibley family, and FARMS are grateful for the generous donations that have made this fellowship program possible. For example, FARMS recently received a donation of \$200 from the Reid/Sloan family

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*

## *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* Publishes Second Issue for 1995

Final editorial work is being completed on the Fall 1995 issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (volume 4, number 2), which should be ready to mail soon after you receive this issue of *Insights*. This issue has a decidedly literary bent. Of the five major articles, three consider the topics of narrative criticism, poetic diction and parallel word pairs, and chiasmus. A fourth takes a literary view of the book of Mosiah.

The rest of the issue (the fifth major article and the five contributions to the Notes and Communications section) varies much more in approach, looking at Book of Mormon topics from

the perspectives of history, geography, archaeology, and doctrine. Of particular interest is William Hamblin's article examining the failure of those who reject the historicity of the Book of Mormon to respond to the increasing body of evidence and argument supporting historicity.

The table of contents of the Fall issue of the *Journal* as planned at the time that *Insights* was sent to the printer is as follows:

John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus."  
Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon."

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*



The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 103

## Revelation and the Urim and Thummim

In the past most biblical scholars viewed the Urim and Thummim as a rather mechanical device used merely to obtain a yes or no answer, similar to casting lots. This is quite different from the function of the device described in the Book of Mormon as “interpreters” and by the Prophet Joseph Smith as the “Urim and Thummim.” In these descriptions of the use of the Urim and Thummim, revelation played a large role. For example, accounts of the translation of the Book of Mormon indicate that Joseph Smith could not translate without the Spirit and that a great deal of mental effort was necessary.<sup>1</sup>

However, two studies by biblical scholars on the Urim and Thummim described in the Old Testament are more in harmony with LDS understandings. On the basis of what appears to be solid historical, linguistic, and textual evidence, Cornelius Van Dam rejects the mechanical view, pointing out numerous instances in which the divine answer is detailed and is not merely yes or no.<sup>2</sup> He argues that “it seems certain that Yahweh’s gift of prophetic inspiration was involved and played a major role in the process of giving answers” through the Urim and Thummim: “When revelation was requested of Yahweh, Yahweh would speak to the high priest or enlighten him and so give him the decision that was necessary. If this inspi-

ration was not forthcoming, the high priest would know that he was in no position to make use of the UT [Urim and Thummim].”<sup>3</sup>

A 1990 article by C. Houtman agrees with Van Dam that the Urim and Thummim was not used merely to receive a mechanical yes or no answer. He puts forward textual evidence that suggests that for the Urim and Thummim to function, divine power had “to penetrate into the heart, the intellectual center of the high priest, in order to enable him to ‘read’ the will of YHWH from the UT.”<sup>4</sup>

It remains to be seen whether the arguments of Van Dam and Houtman will persuade biblical scholars and whether new evidence and new interpretations will support or weaken their position. But for now their arguments open the door to an understanding of the Urim and Thummim that sees a greater role for revelation, in keeping with the understanding obtained from latter-day scripture.

Other points in these two studies may also shed light on Book of Mormon passages. Van Dam argues that in many instances in the Old Testament the phrase *inquire of the Lord* indicates the use of the Urim and Thummim.<sup>5</sup> On at least two occasions Nephite commanders sent messengers to Alma so that he could “inquire of the Lord” as to the whereabouts of their enemies (Alma 16:6; 43:23–24). In each

case Alma revealed specific directions allowing the Nephites to gain advantage over their enemies. Perhaps Alma used the Urim and Thummim to obtain this knowledge. We know he possessed the interpreters (Mosiah 28:20; Alma 37:24), which Joseph Smith described as the Urim and Thummim, and the account in the book of Mormon fits the biblical usage described by Van Dam.

Finally, Van Dam suggests that there was a visual component to the use of the Urim and Thummim: “A special or miraculous light was somehow involved in the functioning of the UT,” possibly through some kind of stone, “in order to verify that the message given by the high priest was from Yahweh.”<sup>6</sup>

The Book of Mormon accounts of the interpreters also suggest a visual component. Ammon indicates that the king of the land of Zarahemla “has wherewith he can look, and translate” (Mosiah 8:13), and Alma speaks of “a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light” to reveal things kept secret (Alma 37:23).

### Notes

1. See D&C 8:1-4; 9:7-9; and Lyndon W. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews* (Orem, Ut.: Grandin, 1991), 86, 199.
2. *The Urim and Thummim* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Van Den Berg, 1986).
3. *Ibid.*, 128.
4. “The Urim and Thummim: A New Suggestion,” *Vetus Testamentum* 40 (April 1990): 231.
5. *Urim and Thummim*, 89-95.
6. *Ibid.*, 130-31.

Based on research by Matthew Roper.

**Staff Notes****Research Staff Adds Senior Project Manager**

The FARMS research staff has been strengthened by the addition of John A. Tvedtnes as Senior Project Manager. He will assist M. Gerald Bradford, Director of Research, taking responsibility for the management of specific research projects.

Tvedtnes comes to FARMS full-time after many years of involvement with the Foundation. He was one of the people contacted by Jack Welch for input at the time of the Foundation's incorporation in 1979. Since then, he has participated in several FARMS symposia, including contributions on the sons of Mosiah and on tribal affiliation and military caste, published in *Warfare and the Book of Mormon*; on olive oil and the symbolism of the Holy Ghost and on the use of the words *vineyard* and *orchard* in connection with the growing of olives, published in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*; and on priestly clothing, published in *Temples of the Ancient World*. He has also written a number of other articles and book reviews for FARMS publications.

He earned a B.A. in anthropology in 1969 at the University of Utah. In 1970, he completed an M.A. in linguistics (specializing in Semitics and generative-transformational grammars and minoring in Arabic) and a Graduate Certificate in Middle East area studies. The following year, he completed a second M.A. in Middle East studies (Hebrew), minoring in anthropology and archaeology. Both graduate degrees were from the University of Utah.



Tvedtnes taught Hebrew and linguistics courses at the University of Utah (1968-71) and classes for the BYU Salt Lake Center (1970-71) prior to going to Israel with his family to work on a Ph.D. in Egyptian and Semitic languages at the Hebrew

University in Jerusalem (for which he completed  $\frac{2}{3}$  of his dissertation). During his eight years in Israel, he taught courses for the BYU Jerusalem Center and guided tours.

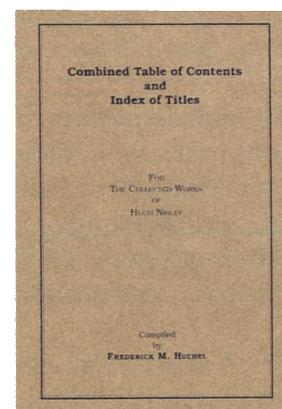
After returning to the U.S. in 1979, Tvedtnes taught part-time at the University of Utah and BYU Salt Lake Center, then went into the healthcare software industry as a technical writer and manager of marketing communication. He has continued to write about the ancient Near East and the scriptures, publishing four books and more than a hundred articles.

In 1981, he was one of only two American scholars invited to travel to Jerusalem to speak at a symposium on ancient Egypt sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture.

**The Nibley corner****Volunteer Creates Index of Titles and Contents for *Collected Works***

Frederick M. Huchel, a long-time FARMS volunteer and fan of the writings of Hugh Nibley, has compiled a combined table of contents for all volumes (1-13) of the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* and an alphabetical index of the section and chapter titles included in those volumes. This handy 24-page pamphlet, donated to FARMS by Huchel, can be ordered at the cost of printing, using the enclosed order form. It should prove useful to readers who wish to find a particular essay or who want to

know what essays have been published in the *Collected Works* so far.



## Publicly speaking

# Lectures Honor Sperry's Work on the Book of Mormon

On October 7, 1995, hundreds of people gathered at BYU to attend the 24th annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, sponsored by Religious Education and the Church Educational System. Members of the Sperry family, faculty and students from BYU, and many other students of the scriptures heard five speakers address gospel topics in the 100th anniversary year of Sperry's birth. Papers from the symposium are being published by Deseret Book (available January 2). You may order a copy using the enclosed order form and we will mail it to you as soon as it is available.

Daniel H. Ludlow, emeritus professor of ancient scripture and former Dean of Religious Education at BYU, opened the symposium with an address on the destiny of the House of Israel. Quoting the words of Joseph Smith, who knew more than any mortal on earth about the destiny of the House of Israel, Ludlow recounted 44 things that Joseph Smith knew about that destiny.

Elder Jeffery R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and former president of BYU delivered the keynote address on Christ in the Book of Mormon. He began with a tribute to Sperry, saying, "Modern Book of Mormon scholarship started with Sidney Sperry." Elder Holland then taught that the Book of Mormon, written as a second witness of Jesus Christ, restores Christ to the Old Testament, from which essential and precious elements have been lost or willfully expunged; particularly, the coming of Christ was taught by all the prophets before Christ, but only in the Book of Mormon do those teaching survive in clarity: "Christ gave us the Book of Mormon, which in turn gave us back the Bible." One of the ancient prophets who taught and testified of Christ was the brother of Jared; Elder Holland examined his life and declared him to be an ordinary man who possessed a faith so perfect that he could not be kept from within the veil. Elder Holland envisioned Christ standing at the veil ready to usher believers through, and challenged listeners to become, like the brother of Jared, "ordinary men and women with ordinary challenges rending the veil of unbelief."

After a short break, John W. Welch spoke on the power of evidence in the nurturing of faith. Welch, who is a BYU law professor, the editor of *BYU Studies*, and the founder of FARMS, examined

the spiritual value of evidence and the relationship of evidence to faith. He quoted latter-day prophets, including President Gordon B. Hinckley and Elders Neal A. Maxwell and Boyd K. Packer, who have said we need both faith and learning to come to a knowledge of the gospel. Welch recounted some of the evidences for the Book of Mormon as an ancient document, saying that "evidence makes the truth plain and plausible"; yet, at the same time, "evidence does not remove the need for faith." Drawing on his legal training, he demonstrated how evidence may be both objective and subjective, depending on what one chooses to examine, what questions one asks, and how one chooses to view and evaluate circumstantial evidence—all choices that must be made with faith. He drew several analogies of the necessary mixture of faith and reason, including metaphors of a tandem bicycle and a jigsaw puzzle, but concluded that what people need most is not another metaphor, but a metamorphosis: a change of the heart.

After a lunch break, the audience heard Robert J. Matthews, emeritus professor of ancient scripture at BYU and former Dean of Religious Education, speak about the power, purpose, and usefulness of the written Book of Mormon. Matthews, who has devoted much of his life to making the scriptures accessible and useful to LDS students, noted that the Book of Mormon is historically as well as spiritually true. Disciples should not neglect its testimony of Christ. "It is a voice from the dust; it should not be a voice *in* the dust.

The final speaker of the symposium was Robert L. Millet, current Dean of Religious Education at BYU, who addressed the regeneration of fallen man. No one, he pointed out, can understand the role of the Savior unless that person first understands the nature of fallen man, and the Book of Mormon provides the most explicit picture of fallen humanity in scripture; it can give its readers the best reason to follow Christ. The gospel is a system of salvation intended to transform not only the individual but also society. By themselves, mortals can never overcome their sinful natures; those natures must be extracted. Only when one is willing to make the unqualified sacrifice of self to Christ will one be converted from worldliness to saintliness, and be "lured from the lurid and enticed by the things of God."

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*From other publishers*

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## Popular Database Soon Available for Macintosh

The Infobases company has announced that its *LDS Collectors Library* (1995 Edition) on CD-ROM will be available before Christmas. The Windows edition of this database was highly recommended in the most recent issue of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*. While we have not yet had an opportunity to examine a copy of the library, we are optimistic that it will be a useful tool for Macintosh users, based on the Windows version.

The *LDS Collectors Library* contains over 800 significant LDS works (including a number of FARMS publications), fully cross-referenced with the Standard Works. The categories of publications included are Standard Works and Scripture Aids (7 titles), Latter-day Prophets (27 titles), Sermons and Speeches (179 titles), LDS Doctrine (62 titles), LDS Church History (230 titles), Other LDS Scholarly Writings (81 titles), Early LDS Newspapers and Periodicals (196 titles), American History (76 titles), and Book of Mormon Studies (22 titles).

New titles included for the first time in this 1995 edition (both Windows and Macintosh versions) are the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, *BYU Studies*, *The Historical Atlas of Mormonism*, *BYU Speeches of the Year*, *Conference Addresses 1899–1970*, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, and many others.

Study aids and marking tools that are included let you add personal commentary and notes, place bookmarks, highlight passages, create cross-references between works, and view more than 1000 pictures, 100 maps, and 285 hymns.

You may order a copy of this library using the enclosed order form, and we will send it to you as soon as it is available. We will make every effort to get your order to you by Christmas.

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## New Set of Lectures to Be Broadcast on KBYU

*The Prophets and Their Messages*, a new set of lectures in the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series, will be broadcast on KBYU-TV (channel 11) beginning in January, every Sunday afternoon at 4:00. This series will include twenty-five lectures from BYU faculty on the major Book of Mormon prophets, analyzing their lives and teachings. Masters of the same set of lectures can also be made available for broadcast on cable and public access TV stations by special arrangement through the FARMS office.

We appreciate the interest of KBYU and hope that these lectures will be of use during this year's study of the Book of Mormon.

### *Nibley Fellowships Awarded*

*(cont. from page 1)*

organization (Nibley is a descendent of both the Reid and Sloan families represented by the organization), supplemented by donations from individual members of the families to a total of \$885. This donation and others, large and small, will help to continue the fellowship, making it possible to support the work of faithful LDS scholars.

### *Latest Issue of Journal (cont. from page 1)*

William J. Hamblin, "The Latest Straw Man."

Edgar C. Snow Jr., "Narrative Criticism and the Book of Mormon."

Gary L. Sturgess, "The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purpose, Themes, and Authorship."

Notes and Communications

William J. Adams Jr., "More on the Silver Plates from Lehi's Jerusalem."

Wallace E. Hunt Jr., "The Marketplace."

Matthew Roper, "Noah Webster and the Book of Mormon."

John A. Tvedtnes, "Cities and Lands in the Book of Mormon."

Christian Ziebarth, "Examining a Nephite/Latter-day Apostolic Parallel."

*New FARMS publications*

## Volunteers Translate a Popular Video Transcript

Thanks to the generous efforts of some student volunteers, the transcript of one of the more popular videos in the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series has been translated into both German and Spanish. Daniel C. Peterson's "A Scholar Looks at Evidences for the Book of Mormon" discusses recent research that supports the spiritual witness for the Book of Mormon, including such things as the translation process, studies of chiasmus, possible locations for events, ancient manuscripts that document practices and beliefs of past civilizations that are consistent with Book of Mormon accounts, Joseph's supposed misnaming of Jesus' birthplace, Joseph's lack of formal schooling, and other items.

The translations, "Un erudito examina las evidencias para el Libro de Mormón" and "Ein Gelehrter begutachtet Beweise für das Buch Mormon," can be obtained from FARMS using the enclosed order form.

FARMS appreciates the efforts of these volunteers and many others like them who contribute their time and talents unselfishly to the work of the foundation.

*Forthcoming publications*

*The Prophets and Their Messages* is a new set of lectures in the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series that focuses on Book of Mormon prophets and the messages they taught. Available beginning in January 1996.

*Scholars Testify*, edited by Susan Easton Black, is a collection of essays by LDS scholars in which they express their testimonies and discuss such topics as the intersections and interactions in their lives between faith and reason and between testimony and scholarship. Copublished with Deseret Book, available in March 1996.

*Upcoming events*

Watch for details in future issues of Insights.

- March 23, 1996. FARMS Symposium on Latter-day Saint Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Joseph Smith Building Auditorium, BYU.
- April 13. The Ninth Annual FARMS Symposium will focus on the address of King Benjamin.
- July 15-17. FARMS/BYU International Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Harmon Conference Center, BYU.

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

Published by the  
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**The Purpose of FARMS**

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon, Another Testament of Jesus Christ, and other ancient scriptures.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation, independent of all other organizations. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

The Foundation works to make interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed both in scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

## Abraham Divided Reprinted

Aspen Books has brought back into print Daniel C. Peterson's 1992 work *Abraham Divided: An LDS Perspective on the Middle East*, in a revised second edition. In this book, Peterson examines the history of the peoples of the Middle East and illuminates their ancient conflicts and prophesied destinies. He reminds us that the blessings of the restored gospel are promised

to people of both Jewish and Arab descent. And he tells the story of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the region.

Peterson treats such topics as the scattering of the Jews; the antagonisms between Jews and Arabs; Arabic hostility to the West; similarities between Islam, Judaism, and the restored gospel; and what the West owes the East.

## Server Problems

The server on which the FARMS HomePage on the World Wide Web is located has suffered some crashes. We are working to find a new server on which to place the HomePage, and we should have a new address by the time the next issue of *Insights* is published.

In the meantime we appreciate your patience and look forward to serving you better soon.

## Professors Millet and Reeve Add to the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series

Robert L. Millet, professor of ancient scripture and Dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, has given another lecture in the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series. "Fools before God: The Evils of Pride and the Power of Humility" echoes President Ezra Taft Benson's warning that "pride is the universal sin . . . the great stumbling block of Zion." Millet examines patterns of pride in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, showing how pride can follow prosperity, how it manifests itself in beliefs and practices, and how it caused the downfall of many Book of Mormon peoples.

Millet also looks at examples of humility in the Book of Mormon. He discusses how humility is both antidote and inoculation against pride, drawing on Jacob's teachings in 2 Nephi that the prideful (the learned, the rich, and others whom the Lord

has blessed who are puffed up because of those blessings) must humble themselves and declare themselves "fools before God" if they hope to receive "that happiness which is prepared for the saints" (2 Nephi 9:42-43).

Rex C. Reeve Jr. has also contributed a lecture to this series. Reeve, who is an associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU, looks at one way in which the Book of Mormon is "A Book Written for Our Day." He outlines a pattern given in the Book of Mormon for enduring to the end and points out that it was given to us by ancient prophets who saw our times and recorded examples intended to help us. These prophets teach us to commit to walk the straight and narrow path. As we come to know the Savior, our love for him increases as does our desire to obey him; thus he helps us close the gap between what he wants and what we want.

These lectures, available using the enclosed order form, and other lectures in the series, listed in the FARMS catalog, bring into your home or classroom inspiring testimonies of the Book of Mormon.

## FARMS Assists in Publication of Scroll Volume

Volume 13 of the series publishing the Dead Sea Scrolls, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*, published by Oxford University Press, is the first to contain full concordances of all the words in the nonbiblical texts in context. The Foreword to this volume credits FARMS with assisting in the preparation of this concordance.

# ORDER FORM

Catalog Number	Items featured in this issue	Qty.	Unit Price	Total Price
J-95b	<i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> , Stephen D. Ricks, editor, Fall 1995, 160 pp.		\$7.95	
N-1	Frederick M. Huchel, <i>Combined Table of Contents and Index of Titles</i> , for the <i>Collected Works of Hugh Nibley</i> , 24 pp.		\$1.50	
SPS-95	<i>Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon</i> , Deseret Book, papers from the Sperry Symposium, available 2 January, retail \$15.95		\$12.75	
INF-COLM	Infobases, <i>LDS Collectors Library</i> , for Macintosh, special release price through January 1996 \$149, save 20%		\$120.00	
INF-COLW	Infobases, <i>LDS Collectors Library</i> , for Windows, special retail \$149, save 20%		\$120.00	
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PET-VT1g	Daniel C. Peterson, "Ein Gelehrter begutachtet Beweise für das Buch Mormon," transcript		\$1.50	
PET-95	Daniel C. Peterson, <i>Abraham Divided</i> , revised, Aspen Books, 377 pp., retail \$16.95		\$13.50	
MIL-V6	Robert L. Millet, "Fools before God: The Evils of Pride and the Power of Humility," video		\$7.95	
MIL-T6	audiotape		\$5.95	
MIL-VT6	transcript		\$1.50	
REE-V1	Rex C. Reeve Jr., "The Book of Mormon: A Book Written for Our Day," video lecture		\$7.95	
REE-T1	audiotape		\$5.95	
REE-VT1	transcript		\$1.50	
<b>Selected items featured in the previous issue of <i>Insights</i></b>				
REV-95B	<i>Review of Books on the Book of Mormon</i> , Daniel C. Peterson, editor, volume 7 number 2, 285 pp.		\$8.95	
STF-95	<i>FARMS 1995 Video Year in Review</i> , 15 min. video shown at FARMS annual banquet		no charge	
MIS-95	<i>The Mission</i> , Time Warner, hardbound, large-format, 224 pp., retail \$49.95, 20% off		\$39.95	
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