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The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) existed from 1979 until 2006, when it was formally incorporated into the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Archived by permission.

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES AT BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



August 2000

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

## Redesigned FARMS Review of Books Released

Sporting a new cover design and format, the latest issue of the *FARMS Review of Books* (vol. 12,

no. 1) looks at an array of recent books related to Mormon studies, biblical studies, and scripture study. In the editor's introduction, Daniel C. Peterson sets the record straight concerning a particularly infamous example of contemporary anti-Mormon rhetoric. His remarks set the stage for much of the nearly 500-page *Review*, which in addition to several positive book reviews, includes a thorough debunking of another anti-Mormon publication, the *Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*.

On the positive side, Cherry B. Silver reviews John L. Sorenson's 1998 book *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* 

and finds that it admirably "convey[s] the wonder of an ancient world." The book also "builds confidence in the story told by Book of Mormon narrators [through its] anthropological detail [and] complex, accurate view of ancient life" portrayed in

> the text and in the many accompanying photographs and illustrations. Silver names three important contributions that the book makes to Book of Mormon studies: (1) its compelling argument for the Book of Mormon as an authentic artifact of antiquity, (2) its evaluation of theories about Book of Mormon geography from the perspective of anthropology, and (3) its reader-friendly format that facilitates understanding and constitutes a "multifaceted substantiation of the Book of Mormon world."

Silver notes the book's omission of source information for publications by Sorenson and by

some of the LDS scholars he refers to and the "lack of conclusive evidence" linking Mesoamerican life with the Book of Mormon account—a limitation *continued on page 4* 

## Early Study of Fraudulent 'Michigan Relics' Available

Now available from FARMS is a reprint of Dr. James E. Talmage's 1911 report that goes a long way toward exposing the "Michigan relics" as forgeries. From 1874 through 1920, hundreds of archaeologically anomalous objects—including tablets, tools, weapons, vessels, and ornaments bearing crudely rendered inscriptions were reportedly dug up from various sites near Detroit, Michi-

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gan. The inscriptions somewhat resembled characters from cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Greek, Hebrew, Assyrian, and Phoenician alphabets. Moreover, some of the objects contained pictographic representations that suggested ties to Hebraic peoples.

Because some people, including Latter-day Saints, continue to give credence to these "relics" and are apparently unaware of Talmage's studied conclusions in this regard, FARMS is recirculating his report, which is still highly informative.





and Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 137

## The Remnant of Joseph

In a speech of encouragement to his troops, the Nephite chief captain Moroni spoke of his people as "a remnant of [the seed of] Joseph" who had been sold into Egypt by his brothers (Alma 46:23–24, 27). This phrase and variations of it appear elsewhere in the Book of Mormon as well (e.g., 3 Nephi 5:23; 10:17; 15:12; Ether 13:6–8, 10).

Readers of the English Bible might suspect that this terminology was borrowed from Amos 5:15, where the prophet wrote, "It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." However, close analysis suggests that Amos, as well as those whose words are recorded in the Book of Mormon passages cited above, may have been influenced by an earlier passage of scripture.

In Genesis 45:7 we find that when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers who had come to Egypt to buy grain, he said, "God *sent* me before you to *preserve you a posterity* in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (emphasis added). The Hebrew term rendered "posterity" in this verse —*sePerît*—actually means "remnant" and is the very same word used in the Hebrew of Amos 5:15.

The Genesis passage is particularly interesting because of its subtle yet telling contextual affinity to the way the Book of Mormon typically uses the expression "remnant of Joseph." In both cases the expression appears in contexts that imply or directly convey the idea of being *sent* to another land in order to be *preserved*. For example, in rallying his people to repel Lamanite aggressions, chief captain Moroni alluded to the Nephites' ancestor Joseph being sold into Egypt when he said of his people, "We are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces" (Alma 46:23). Moroni's point was that the Nephites must keep the commandments so they would be "preserved by the hand of God" as a faithful remnant of Joseph, "while the remainder of the seed of Joseph [would] perish" (v. 24).

This linkage to Genesis 45:7 is particularly apparent in Ether 13:7, where the later Moroni, son of Mormon, writes: "For as Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, . . . the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, even as he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not" (Ether 13:7).

This same general idea of preservation in another land is found in Ether 13:6–10, where Moroni mentions the New Jerusalem to be built up in the land given to the remnant of Joseph, and in 3 Nephi 10:17 and 15:12–14, where the expression "remnant of the seed [house] of Joseph" is used in connection with Lehi's coming to the New World.

Because the full implication of this tie between the words of Joseph in Genesis 45:7 and use of the phrase "remnant of Joseph" in the Book of Mormon is clear only by looking at Joseph's words in the original Hebrew, we have here an excellent piece of evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup>

#### Note

1. In 1829, when he translated the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith had not yet studied Hebrew, so it is highly unlikely that he would have been alert to the nuance in Genesis 45:7 that is so compatible with Book of Mormon usage and is not discoverable (and certainly not apparent) elsewhere in the Bible.



By John A. Tvedtnes

## **Traveling Scrolls Exhibit a Success**

Since February of this year, FARMS has been showing an exhibit on the Dead Sea Scrolls in LDS stake centers throughout the Midwest.

Originally envisioned as a way to galvanize interest in a much larger LDS-sponsored scrolls exhibit on display at Chicago's Field Museum earlier this year, the traveling exhibit quickly proved to be a popular attraction in its own right. So far more than 40,000 people have visited the exhibit during its stops in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri.

Many of the local stakes that helped with the exhibit have reported that the event was one of the best they have ever had in terms of community outreach. Some stakes estimated that as many as 75 percent of the visitors were not Latter-day Saints, and in other locations that figure was commonly 50 percent. One visitor, a Catholic priest, commented, "An excellent exhibit. I'm overwhelmed."

Among the many people who have contributed to the exhibit's success are two couples, Arthur and Carrole Hatch of Mesa, Arizona, and Ned and Jean Williams of Salt Lake City, Utah. Called by BYU president Merrill J. Bateman as BYU service representatives and set apart by their local priesthood leaders, the Hatches and Williamses accompanied the exhibit and acted as hosts. According to Brent Hall, the director of operations at FARMS, they have had "a profound positive effect on this exhibit. Without their help, it would not have been possible to



BYU service representatives Arthur and Carrole Hatch (left) and Jean and Ned Williams join forces to host a showing of the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit.

take the exhibit to the many places it has gone." President Samuel Otto, who presides over the Milwaukee Wisconsin Stake and coordinated the exhibit there, was similarly appreciative of the couples' efforts to help make the exhibit a success. "The Hatches and Williamses were always so gracious and wonderful hosts and leaders," he remarked. "They started early and worked late. They brought a great spirit to our stake."

Stake and ward public affairs councils did an outstanding job of promoting the exhibit and orchestrating related activities. In Independence, Missouri, Donald Parry, a BYU professor of Hebrew and FARMS board member who is a member of the international team of Dead Sea Scroll editors, appeared on television and multiple radio programs, spoke to a capacity crowd at a fireside, and met with ministers of religion, city and county dignitaries, journalists, and other community members to answer questions about the scrolls and the LDS Church's participation in scroll-related matters.

Another FARMS board member, BYU law professor John Welch, gave an evening lecture at Chicago's Field Museum on the spiritual strivings of the people who produced the scrolls. Some 200 people attended that event, including many VIPs who had been invited from the local clergy and scholarly communities. BYU professors of ancient scripture David Seely (also a member of the FARMS board) and Dana Pike, both members of the international team of scroll editors, spoke to capacity crowds at LDS Church firesides in Chicago and St. Louis. Kevin Barney, an attorney and scrolls scholar from Chicago, traveled to Nauvoo to be the exhibit representative to the press and to

answer questions for persons attending special opening sessions.

Sponsored by Brigham Young University and FARMS, the traveling exhibit features scroll replicas, artifacts, audio commentary, photographs and illustrations, and a model of Qumran (a building complex that, according to some scholars, was a religious center where the scrolls were copied before they were secreted in nearby caves).

After its present stay in Nauvoo, Illinois (until 4 September), the exhibit will travel to Topeka, Kansas, and Denver, Colorado. For a current schedule of exhibit showings, visit the FARMS Web site at http://farms.byu.edu and click on the "Events Calendar" button.

## **Review of Books**

#### (continued from page 1)

that she readily acknowledges is inherent in this kind of study. Overall, Silver considers *Images of Ancient America* "a landmark book, providing a substantial bridge between research and religious communities in its scholarship, answering questions long posed by Book of Mormon readers about the actual life of these peoples, and setting forth key verbal and visual arguments for a Mesoamerican setting for this narrative."

In his review of Guy G. Stroumsa's *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism,* Barry R. Bickmore observes, "When our neighbors approach the Latter-day Saint religion, they are often struck by the extent to which *secrecy* plays a part in our faith and practice," something that seems undemocratic to them in "the religion some have called the quintessential American faith." Bickmore reminds readers that "Mormonism claims primarily to be a restoration of primitive Christianity—not some peculiarly concentrated distillation of the American ethos."

Referring to Stroumsa's book as perhaps "the most comprehensive study to date on early Christian secrecy," Bickmore notes that "Mormons and non-Mormons alike might be shocked by how many esoteric doctrines and rituals extensively permeated the ancient religion of Jesus' followers."

Bickmore discusses secrecy regarding doctrine and ritual in the primitive church and makes com-

## New Audiotapes on Temples, Dead Sea Scrolls

The latest addition to FARMS's Hugh Nibley Audiotape Signature Series, *Temples Everywhere* contains Nibley's address of the same title given last year at BYU's "Temples through the Ages" conference. Nibley explores temple worship in ancient times as the source for religious rites and beliefs seen in diverse cultures throughout history. He discusses how the temple was "the only solution to the one great problem that has ever haunted the human race, the problem of facing death." This address includes remarks on ancient Egyptian funerary lore, the prevalence of "creation-drama" rites worldwide, the rise of royal courts and rhetoric, the loss of temples, and the resultant decay in modern society.

LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls features several presentations given at a BYU conference in 1996 and published the following year in a FARMS book of the same title. In this audiotape, five BYU faculty members, four of whom belong to the international team of scholars who are working on the Dead Sea Scrolls, discuss the history of the scrolls, similarities between the scrolls and the Book of Mormon, and the history and worship practices of the Qumran people.

See the enclosed order form or visit the FARMS Web site for purchasing information.

parisons to current LDS theology and worship practices. Readers will be interested to learn about early Christian esoteric traditions concerning salvation for the dead, an anthropomorphic God, and covenant keeping.

In Bickmore's view the study of primitive Christianity, facilitated by Stroumsa's book *Hidden Wisdom*, will help Latter-day Saints better understand "the dynamics of the apostasy from the pure Christian faith, both in terms of *what* was lost and *how* it was lost."

In another positive and thoughtful review, Nathan Oman looks at Edwin B. Firmage and Richard C. Mangrum's 1988 Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900. This book deals with the church's continued on page 7





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## Review of Books (continued from page 4)

experience with the U.S. legal system and, as Oman notes, is divided into three sections: "The first section chronicles the years from 1830 to 1844. The second section deals with the massive legal battle the church fought with the federal government over the practice of plural marriage. The final portion focuses on the system of ecclesiastical courts that sought to serve all Mormon judicial needs in the nineteenth century." Oman remarks approvingly that the authors provide "a genuinely new approach to previously treated events without resorting to violent revisionism."

Toward the end of the review, Oman explains his philosophy regarding two methodological approaches in Mormon scholarship: "Mormon studies" and "Mormon perspectives." According to Oman, the first method, used by Firmage and Mangrum in their book, views Mormonism as subject matter from within the framework of the discipline of the person undertaking the study. Oman believes that this method has the pitfalls common to any study that is conducted under the scrutiny of so narrow a field. In addition, there is the pitfall of granting "intellectual authority to some system of thought beyond the gospel," because "it is naïve to assume that any intellectual discipline's pursuit of knowledge is always neutral vis-à-vis the gospel. There can and will be conflicts between the truths of revelation and the assumptions of certain kinds of scholarly inquiry."

Oman sees great value in the "Mormon perspectives" approach because of its potential to challenge and shape conventional thinking by using Mormonism as a lens to scrutinize existing theories. This approach is more daring because it "suggests that the experience and doctrine of a relatively minor—by the world's standards—religion can seriously challenge and engage in the great dialogue of our civilization." Although Oman believes that Zion in the Courts "could have been a much more ambitious work" if its authors had used Mormonism to examine the law rather than vice versa, he commends them for "an admirable job" of treating the legal experience of the Latter-day Saints in a work that may yet prove to be seminal in the developing field of Mormon jurisprudence.

The bulk of the *Review* is an extensive response to the anti-Mormon Book *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*, which was written partly in response to Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson's well-received 1997 book *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation.* Both books address the same subjects: scripture, God, Christ, and salvation.

In questioning the assumptions underlying the evangelical view of Christianity, the reviewers of *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism* focus on the hellenization of Christianity. They also look at the logic of the arguments presented, often finding the reasoning faulty. As one reviewer, Alma Allred, puts it, "[These writers supplant] logic and evidence with assertions and double standards." The result, he asserts, is a gross misrepresentation of LDS beliefs and at times even a distortion of the evangelical view.

Of particular interest are the two reviews of a chapter by Norman Geisler titled "Scripture." The first review carefully analyzes the chapter's falsifications and distortions of LDS beliefs, and the second documents Geisler's wholesale plagiarism of Jerald and Sandra Tanner's book The Changing World of Mormonism. The last chapter of the book, "A Word to Our Mormon Friends," also receives a review, "A Word to Our Anti-Mormon Friends." This review summarizes many of the problems addressed in the other reviews and discusses the need for a more fair discussion of LDS beliefs by those who criticize them. In the end, the reviewers all show that The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism is exactly what the title proclaims: a book that purports to have the truth about Mormonism but really does not.

This issue of the *Review* also contains favorable reviews of three study aids for students of the scriptures: *Searching the Scriptures: Bringing Power to Your Personal and Family Study,* by Gene R. Cook; *Treasure Up the Word,* by Jay E. Jensen; and *Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions,* by James E. Faulconer. It also includes an index to last year's issues of the *Review.* To order a copy of the newly redesigned *Review,* use the enclosed order form or visit the ordering section of the FARMS Web site.

**INSIGHTS, AUGUST 2000** 

## Relics (continued from page 1)

In 1998 the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (vol. 7, no. 1) called attention to Talmage's report in an article that discusses the revival of the Michigan relics story in recent years and the ease with which credulous people accept spurious information about "the mysteries of the past." The article also mentions devastating evidence against the relics that Talmage never made public because an informant privy to the deception, before signing for him a declaration that the relics were fakes, obligated him not to make the information public during the lifetime of her mother, whose husband had manufactured many of the phony artifacts (see "James E. Talmage and the Fraudulent 'Michigan Relics,'" 78).

Beginning in 1909, Talmage, a geologist (and soon-to-be apostle in the LDS Church), conducted a field investigation of the Michigan relics and published his findings in the *Deseret Museum Bulletin* in 1911. The report, titled "The 'Michigan Relics': A Story of Forgery and Deception," details Talmage's sleuthing that led him to make this pronouncement: "As a result of my investigation, I am thoroughly convinced that the alleged 'relics' are forgeries and that they are made and buried to be dug up on demand."

Although further points could be added, this 30-page report contains keen analysis, engaging commentary, and photographs of many of the counterfeit relics. To obtain a copy, use the enclosed order form or visit the FARMS Web site.

#### Forthcoming publications -

- The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: Out of Darkness unto Light, by John A. Tvedtnes, draws on a substantial body of modern research to discuss numerous examples of ancient records whose physical characteristics, method and circumstances of concealment, and related aspects are remarkably similar to the Book of Mormon and its coming forth.
- A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri, by Egyptologist John Gee, contains an overview of the basic facts and major theories about the papyri, along with helpful maps, illustrations, charts, and glossaries of terms and names. This full-color, reader-friendly guide addresses many questions about the papyri with the latest Egyptological research and Latter-day Saint thinking on the subject.



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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. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation at Brigham Young University. 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. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these publications, including most royalties, are used to support further research and publications on the scriptures. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both 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.

For more information or to order publications, call 1-800-327-6715 (or 801-373-5111) or visit our Web site at http://farms.byu.edu

