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INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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

Essays Honor Hugh Nibley

The first of the two-volume set, *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, is now available for sale. This monumental effort, worthy of the man it strives to honor, has been called by Eugene England "a high-water mark in faithful Mormon scholarship" (in *This People* [Spring 1990], p. 62). This 800-page first volume and the page proofs of the second volume were presented to Professor Nibley on his eightieth birthday on March 27. (Those who wish to contribute to the celebration of Nibley's birthday and the preparation of the second volume may still do so on the order form in this issue; those contributing \$80 or more will receive the two-volume set free.)

These volumes have been edited by Dr. John M. Lundquist, Susan and Douglas Dillon Chief Librarian of the Oriental Division of the New York Public Library, and Stephen D. Ricks, Associate Professor of Hebrew at BYU and President of F.A.R.M.S. Volume one contains

twenty-six contributions by distinguished scholars, friends, and former students of Professor Nibley and deals with subjects such as the Bible, the ancient Near East, early Eastern Christianity, formative Judaism, and the Classics. Also treated are aspects of kingship, the temple, and the sacred. This volume will be acknowledged for its exceptional scholarship, editing, and faithful insights.

Notable are papers by world-renowned scholars, including Aziz Atiya's study on the "Copts and the Bible," James Charlesworth's "From the Philopodia of Jesus to the Misopodia of the Acts of Thomas," Cyrus Gordon's treatment of the ancient Hebrew inscription found at Bat Creek, Tennessee, which provides further evidence for pre-Columbian contact with America, Jacob Milgrom's analysis of some puzzling passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Jacob Neusner's stimulating study on the Jewish Midrash on Leviticus, and Raphael Patai's examination of

(continued inside)

New World Bountiful ?

Recently F.A.R.M.S. and BYU jointly supported a photo reconnaissance expedition in southern Mexico that focused on searching for an archaeological site that could qualify as the city of Bountiful in the Book of Mormon. Based on a research plan initiated by John Sorenson, David A. Palmer and several associates made aerial reconnaissance of the area just east of the Coatzacoalcos River in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the zone around Cerro El Vigia. Selected areas were then examined on the ground. In separate books by Sorenson and Palmer, the isthmian territory now targeted was considered the likely spot for Bountiful, while El Vigia was considered the probable scene of the final Jaredite and Nephite battles.

A major site (previously unreported) was found near the mouth of the Tonalá River some 17 miles from the Coatzacoalcos; it may meet all the geographical criteria for Bountiful. Information on it and other important sites is being made available to archaeologists in hopes that authoritative tests will be made to establish the age of the finds. Several hours of videotape made on the trip are being edited into an hour-long presentation that will be available through F.A.R.M.S. in the near future. As further research warrants, the results of this photo reconnaissance may be published as part of a F.A.R.M.S. paper or book.

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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Women and Family in the Book of Mormon

F.A.R.M.S. is pleased to feature three recent articles that have dealt with women and the family in the Book of Mormon. Although only six women are mentioned by name in this volume (Sariah, Isabel, Abish, Eve, Sarah, and Mary the Mother of Jesus—and only the first three were figures in the actual Nephite account), many women are known in the book for their courageous and faithful lives, and the message of the Book of Mormon is addressed to all people, “male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 11:44; 32:23).

Increasingly, students can see that women were important in Nephite religion and society. For example, they were present at the temple for Benjamin’s great covenant renewal and coronation (Mosiah 2:5) and for Jesus’ appearance at the temple in Bountiful (3 Nephi 17:25).

Francine Bennion, “Women and the Book of Mormon,” in *Women of Wisdom and Knowledge* (Deseret Book, 1990), discusses several memorable women in the book, and asks revealing questions about the nature of tradition in any society and about how God gives answers to modern problems. She finds that we are “both like and different from the people of Nephi and Moroni.”

John Sorenson’s study, “The Composition of Lehi’s Family,” will soon appear in volume 2 of *By Study and Also by Faith*. Giving great attention to detail, it reconstructs what can be known about the ages and relationships of members of Lehi’s family, offering many insights into their personalities, rivalries, and challenges.

In “Lehi’s Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach” (in *Second Nephi* [BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989]), John Welch suggests Near Eastern family law backgrounds to Lehi’s position over his sons, their marriages, their family organization, and the rights of firstborn sons. Intriguing is the likelihood that 2 Nephi 1–4 served, among other things, as a division of Lehi’s estate under the ancient equivalent of a last will and testament.

These items are available on the attached order form. See also Marjorie M. Spencer, “My Book of Mormon Sisters,” *Ensign* 7 (September 1977): 66–71.

Literary Aspects of the Book of Mormon

In the third annual F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon lecture, entitled “The Book of Mormon, Designed for Our Day,” Professor Richard D. Rust of the University of North Carolina discussed how the Book of Mormon was shaped artistically to speak to us in this day. He examined literary aspects of the book that develop the primary purposes set out in the title page.

Rust believes that from a literary perspective, the thousand-year history of Lehi’s family can be considered an epic that shows the Lamanites the “great things the Lord hath done for their fathers.” He discussed the elements characteristic of an epic that are present in the Book of Mormon, and argued that these help modern-day Lamanites understand that they are descendants of Lehi and that just as the Lord delivered Lehi and his family, so the Lord will deliver them.

Another purpose of the Book of Mormon is to help the Lamanites know the covenants of the Lord. Rust discussed literary elements, especially poetry, that help make the presentations of these covenants in the Book of Mormon more memorable and powerful. Then he illustrated how imagery is used to show latter-day Lamanites that “they are not cast off forever.”

Finally, Rust turned to the Book of Mormon’s stated purpose to convince “Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.” Here he focused on the literary element of typology in which “all God-given events or God-directed persons in the Book of Mormon are figures of Jesus Christ or his gospel.”

Rust concluded with remarks about how the literary elements he had discussed “conjoin with the influence of the Spirit to give in the most stirring and memorable way possible a

testament of identity and purpose to modern-day Lamanites and testimony to Jews and Gentiles that Jesus is the Christ.”

Rust’s lecture was well received by the large audience in attendance and sparked considerable discussion. You may obtain a printed copy of the lecture by using the order form in this issue.

Nibley Essays (Cont.)

laws regarding seafaring among the ancient Jews, which helps provide a framework for understanding the extent of Nephite knowledge concerning maritime matters.

Among the LDS contributors to the volume are S. Kent Brown, Todd M. Compton, John F. Hall, William J. Hamblin, David B. Honey, Kent P. Jackson, Suzanne E. Lundquist, Thomas W. Mackay, Truman G. Madsen, Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, R. Douglas Phillips, Bruce H. Porter, Marian Robertson, Robert K. Thomas, Gordon C. Thomasson, John W. Welch, and David J. Whitaker. The editors have also contributed articles.

Wulf Barsch, noted artist and member of the art faculty at Brigham Young University, contributed an original painting for the frontispiece of the volume, and Louis Midgley prepared a current bibliography and register of the works by Nibley, including the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*. This annotated bibliography also discusses some reviews of Nibley’s works.

This publication has received extraordinary praise from Brigham Young University officials and friends. See the interview of Brother Nibley in the May issue of *BYU Today*, p. 32.

These volumes contain essays reflecting the many-faceted interests of Professor Nibley and provide engaging, stimulating, and challenging reading. Buying your copy through F.A.R.M.S. is not only simple and convenient, but it is a very significant form of financial support to help the Foundation cover its costs in this extensive project. See the order form in this issue.

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Decorative Iron in Early Israel

At times when iron was scarce, it was used as a precious decorative metal. So concludes a recent article, "King Og's Iron Bed—Fact or Fancy," *Bible Review* (April 1990): 16-21. Here, Alan R. Millard documents archaeological evidence for the early use of iron to *decorate* beds (see Deuteronomy 3:11) and thrones, as well as for bracelets and jewelry, weapons and royal swords. Such beds or jeweled boxes were not solid iron, but they were plated, veneered, or studded with the metal.

The article features pictures illustrating how, in the second millennium B.C., iron was "highly prized," like other precious metals and lapis lazuli. "At a time when iron was hard to obtain, the product of a difficult technique, a bed or a throne decorated with it could be a treasure in a king's palace."

With such a point in mind, one can reread the account of King Noah who built many elegant buildings and "ornamented them with fine work of wood, and of all manner of precious things, of gold, and of silver, and of iron (!) . . ." (Mosiah 11:8). Although a person today would not normally think of using iron as a precious decoration, we can now see that this was actually done in antiquity.

Thus it appears that iron was present in the city of Nephi in Noah's time, but it was rare and precious then, just as it was in the early Iron Age in Palestine. This was probably always the case in Book of Mormon society, for *all* New World references to iron in the book mention it together with gold and silver and other precious things (see 2 Nephi 5:15; Jarom 1:8; Ether 10:23). Perhaps this metal was especially prized among the Nephites due to the great symbolic and spiritual value of the "rod of iron" in Lehi's vision in 1 Nephi 8.

Insights into Genesis

Genesis Made Whole, by Todd Andersen, weaves all the words in the book of Genesis and related scriptural records, particularly the relevant materials in the books of Moses and Abraham and the Joseph Smith Translation, into a single account. It covers premortality, the creation, the Fall, and the lives and teachings of the ancients from Adam to Moses.

In addition, explanatory discussions of interesting and difficult points based on the writings of Joseph Smith, Hugh Nibley, Flavius Josephus, Louis Ginzberg, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and other sources have been included. A standard index and other helps assist the reader in finding any desired text quickly.

F.A.R.M.S. is making this excellent help to scriptural study available at 10% off the regular price, \$11.75 for softbound and \$15.25 for hardbound, on the attached order form.

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