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FOUNDATION FOR
ANCIENT RESEARCH &
MORMON STUDIES

INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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

F.A.R.M.S. FINISHES THREE MAJOR PROJECTS IN JUNE

June has been a productive month. Thanks to hundreds of volunteer hours, three significant projects have recently been completed. We think you will be interested in each of them.

1. The *1985 F.A.R.M.S. Catalog*. This 16-page booklet lists over 300 items which are now available from F.A.R.M.S. Every item in the catalog is described and abstracted so that readers can easily understand what each paper, book, or video is about. The catalog makes a large scripture research library available to virtually everyone, worldwide. It includes all current F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon research items, as well as the now practically complete Hugh Nibley Archive. This catalog is a real monument to many years of good scholarship on the Book of Mormon. You can order extra copies at 50¢. A sheet listing the items alphabetically can be had for 25¢.

2. John Sorenson's long-awaited book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985), is now available. It has been called "required reading." You will find it very rewarding in many ways. Since orders placed through F.A.R.M.S. help the foundation most, we hope you will order your copy immediately. The full price is \$14.95, which includes all handling and shipping costs. There is no sales tax through F.A.R.M.S., and, in addition, all royalties on this book go to the Foundation to support scriptural research. Add \$3.00 more and we will send a set of 16 *Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican maps reprinted from the book*. These are great for study and classroom use.

3. The Hugh Nibley documentary, *The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley*, has premiered and is now available on VHS cassettes. F.A.R.M.S. began working on this movie over two years ago; it was eventually completed as a joint venture between F.A.R.M.S. and BYU Media Production. Filmed on locations from Egypt to Berkeley, this video lets Dr. Nibley express his personal feelings about life, spirituality, wealth, education, war, and the meaning of the scriptures and the temple. Complete price is \$29.95. Add \$1.50 for a *footnoted transcript of the soundtrack*.

"SALAMANDERS" AND "SHORT-HAND EGYPTIAN"

The 1830 letter of Martin Harris to W. W. Phelps, published in the *Church News* in April, has already attracted national attention. In this letter, Harris describes an early spiritual appearance to Joseph Smith, stating that "the spirit transfigured himself from a white salamander in the bottom of the hole."

This letter has been the subject of two fascinating research projects at F.A.R.M.S. this month. Aside from questions like "Is the letter authentic?" "From whom did Harris get his information?" and "Did Harris violate D&C 5:26 when he wrote to Phelps?" we have focused on "salamanders" and "short-hand Egyptian."

1. The preliminary results of our work on salamanders are now available in the report "Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel with a Salamander?" This documented collection of information can be ordered on the attached form. In it you will learn how, for centuries, the salamander has been used as a symbol of supernatural and extraordinary powers. For example:

Old Jewish traditions, found in *Exodus Rabbah*, say that God showed Moses a salamander in the fire on Mt. Sinai.

Well into the 19th century, it was commonly believed that salamanders lived in or were able to endure fire. Indeed, they were thought to be "generated in fire," according to the great Jewish Rabbi Akiba and as reported by Aristotle.

In Germany, salamanders were thought to be weather prophets ("Wetterpropheten") and house-protector spirits ("Hausgeistern"). German churchdoor locks and bolts, as well as ovens and fireplaces, had salamander insignia on them.

In England, baptism "by fire and by the Holy Ghost" was depicted by the image of a salamander in the Winchester Cathedral.

In the Bible and Book of Mormon, the salamander image may be connected with the "fiery flying serpent," which symbolized Christ himself.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a non-profit 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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In the Middle Ages, the salamander denoted "a being possessing the shape of a man, whose element was the fire, or who at least could live in that element," according to *Chambers' Encyclopedia* (1875).

These and many other details help put Martin Harris' words into perspective. In this light, we can understand why W. W. Phelps would not have been disconcerted, but rather favorably impressed, by such a reference.

2. Our work on the great (but largely unnoticed) significance of the phrase "short-hand Egyptian" in this same Harris letter can be found in a second report, "Martin Harris' Visit to Charles Anthon: Collected Documents on Short-hand Egyptian." For years, there has been some controversy over what Professor Anthon actually told Martin Harris. Harris' letter now gives us the very earliest firsthand account of what transpired.

In this account, Harris says Anthon told him that the Book of Mormon characters were "short-hand Egyptian." This turns out to be a scholarly term, known to just a few students of ancient languages. Anthon was part of that scholarly community; Harris was not.

This was the term used in the 1820s to describe the system of writing hieratic Egyptian used around the time of Lehi. We know from Anthon's booklists that he had and read books using this terminology. Harris, it would seem, could only have learned this term from Anthon, notwithstanding Anthon's later protests attempting to deny any such thing.

The F.A.R.M.S. report supplies you with extensive documentation, including copies of the hieratic Egyptian plates known to Anthon which compare favorably with Joseph Smith's transcript of the Book of Mormon characters.

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Increasingly, questions are being asked about how the Book of Mormon came to be. Few of these questions are new, for each generation must confront the challenging presence of the Book of Mormon for itself, the same as have the generations before us. In this light, it may be of interest for us to re-read the five-part series from the 1959 *Improvement Era* written by Hugh Nibley, entitled "Mixed Voices." For the first time, these five articles are now available as a set.

Part 1, "Kangaroo Court," is a witty expose of anti-Mormon methods of Book of Mormon criticism. Says Nibley, "It is the inalienable right of every accused person to be represented by competent counsel, heard by an impartial jury, and sentenced by a qualified judge, being convicted or acquitted only on evidence and not on hearsay. To expect such extravagant justice

for the Book of Mormon is to ask for the moon." Parts 2 and 4, "Just Another Book?" and "What Frontier, What Camp Meeting?," show ways in which the Book of Mormon was out-of-sorts with the nineteenth century and, thus, not "just another book" of that time period, especially the religious and political milieu of the American frontier. Parts 3 and 5, "Grab Bag" and "Comparative Method," raise questions of the critics' methodology, especially as to the issue whether the Book of Mormon copies Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*.

Many other Nibley papers have been added recently to the F.A.R.M.S. Catalog and Nibley Archive. Please consult the 1985 Catalog for further papers now available.

HOW WAS THE BOOK OF MORMON USED BY THE EARLY SAINTS?

When the Book of Mormon was first translated and published, it was brand new to the entire world. Its doctrines, messages, personalities, and details were all in need of rediscovery. Even the Prophet Joseph Smith, the instrument through which God transmitted this record, does not appear to have fully assimilated all its complexities and nuances, for he rarely quoted from the Book of Mormon (as one might expect had he written the book).

What the Book of Mormon meant to the Saints from 1830 to 1846, therefore, makes an intriguing study. What did they see in this amazing book? Which sections did they quote from? Which passages did they emphasize? Grant Underwood's prize-winning "Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology," reprinted from *Dialogue*, where it won the Silver Foundation Writing Contest for 1984, provides some answers to these kinds of questions.

For example, the principal theological themes (in decreasing order of frequency) for which the Book of Mormon was cited in the sources that Underwood surveys are (1) the restoration of Israel, (2) the wickedness of Christendom in 1830, (3) the atonement, (4) the mission of Joseph Smith, (5) the first principles of the Gospel, (6) a concern for holiness, and (7) revelation and spiritual gifts. Prophetic sections of the book, especially in 2 Nephi 25-33 and 3 Nephi 16-21, account for the vast majority of verses quoted. On the other hand, scriptures like King Benjamin's speech (which are used so frequently today) were still virtually undiscovered.

Underwood's paper, with its numerous charts, graphs, and long appendix, is available on the attached order sheet. It provides a good point of departure for understanding the learning of the Saints in the early years of the Church, as well as for reflecting on how we today use the Book of Mormon for religious inspiration and instruction.

THIEVES AND ROBBERS

Although there isn't much difference between a thief and a robber in most minds, there was a considerable difference between the two under ancient Near Eastern law. A thief (*ganab*) was usually a local person who stole from his *neighbor*. He was dealt with judicially. He was tried and punished civilly, most often by a court composed of his fellow townspeople. A robber, on the other hand, was an *outsider*, a brigand or highwayman. He was dealt with militarily. These outlaws could be executed summarily.

The legal distinction between theft and robbery, especially under the laws of ancient Israel, have been analyzed thoroughly by Bernard S. Jackson, Professor of Law at the University of Kent-Canterbury and editor of the *Jewish Law Annual*. He shows, for example, how robbers usually acted in organized groups rivaling local governments and attacking towns, how they swore oaths and extorted ransom, a menace worse than outright war. Thieves, however, were a much less serious threat to society.

In "Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and in Ancient Near Eastern Law," John W. Welch shows in detail how this ancient legal and linguistic distinction is meticulously observed in the Book of Mormon. This explains how Laban could call the sons of Lehi "robbers" and threaten to execute them on the spot without a trial, for that is how a military officer like Laban no doubt would have dealt with a robber. It explains why the Lamanites are always said to "rob" from the Nephites but not from their own brethren—that would be "theft," not "robbery." It also explains the rise and fearful menace of the Gadianton society, who are always called "robbers" in the Book of Mormon, never "thieves."

Other significant details also emerge. It is probably no coincidence that the Hebrew word for "band" or "bandits" is *gedud*, and the most famous Book of Mormon robbers were known as Gadianton's "band." Like *gedud*, the name Gadianton was spelled with two "d"s, *Gaddianton*, in the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon.

The importance of the presence of this ancient legal tradition in the Book of Mormon is enhanced by two further factors. First, Anglo-American common law would have provided Joseph Smith with quite a different understanding, inconsistent in many ways with usages found in the Book of Mormon. Second, if Joseph Smith had relied on his King James Bible for such a distinction, he would have stumbled into error, for that tradition renders "thief" and "robber" indiscriminately. For example, the same phrase is translated inconsistently as "den of robbers" and "den of thieves" in Jer. 7:11 and Matt. 21:13. The same word (*lestai*) is translated sometimes as "thieves" (Matt. 27:38), other times as "robber" (John 18:40). But there is a difference between thieves and robbers which translators should not neglect.

HOW TO PLACE YOUR ORDERS BY TELEPHONE

The F.A.R.M.S. office can be reached by telephone: (801) 378-3295. Orders can be placed with a phone call, if we can charge the order to your Visa or MasterCard. The office is generally staffed from 10-12 a.m. and 2-4 p.m., but our clerks may be out on errands. You can then leave a message on our answer-phone or try back later. The surest way to place your order is by mail, but for rush orders, using the telephone may work out better for you.

WILL YOU STAY ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Beginning in 1985, payment of a minimum \$10.00 annual contribution (\$5.00 for senior citizens, low-income families, students, and missionaries—permanent addresses only, please) is required in order to continue receiving the *Insights* newsletter. We will continue operating on as low a budget as possible, with as many volunteer officers and as much volunteer assistance as we can muster, but cash we must also have—hence the fee. Your support is essential to our success and is deeply appreciated.

OPEN HOUSES IN PROVO

Guests in Provo for CES meetings and Education Week are invited to open houses at the F.A.R.M.S. office in Provo on August 15 and 22 (both Thursdays) between 7 and 10 p.m. You will be able to see screenings of the three F.A.R.M.S. videos, visit with authors, peruse our stock of nearly 300 publications, and find out how the Foundation operates. The office is located upstairs in Amanda Knight Hall, on the corner of 800 North and University Avenue. Call us at (801) 378-3295 if you have any questions.

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CAT-85	F.A.R.M.S. 1985 Catalog: Listed by Subjects, Annotated		\$.50	
CAT-85a	F.A.R.M.S. 1985 Catalog: Supplemental Alphabetical Listing by Authors		\$.25	
KIM-70	Kimball, Stanley B., <i>The Anthon Transcript: People, Primary Sources, and Problems (BYU Studies, 1970)</i> , 28 pp.		\$ 1.50	
N-MIX-SET	Nibley, Hugh W., <i>Mixed Voices (Improvement Era, 1959)</i> , 37 pp.		\$ 2.25	
NIB-V	Hugh Nibley Video, <i>The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley (1985)</i>		\$29.95	
STF-85	Hugh Nibley Video Transcript: Footnoted and Annotated Soundtrack of "The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley"		\$ 1.50	
SOR-85	Sorenson, John L., <i>An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon</i>		\$14.95	
SOR-85x	Sorenson, John L., Errata Sheet for First Printing of <i>An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon</i>		Free	
SOR-85a	Sorenson, John L., Study Maps of the Book of Mormon		\$ 3.00	
STF-85a	Staff, F.A.R.M.S., Martin Harris' Visit to Charles Anthon: Collected Documents on Short-hand Egyptian		\$ 2.75	
STF-85b	Staff, F.A.R.M.S., Why Might a Person in 1830 Connect an Angel with a Salamander?		\$ 1.50	
UND-84	Underwood, Grant, <i>Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology (Dialogue, 1984)</i> , 40 pp.		\$ 2.00	
WEL-85a	Welch, John W., <i>Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and Ancient Near Eastern Law</i>		\$ 2.00	

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SPECIAL THANKS TO KIRK MAGLEBY AND KEN PORTER

Two hard-working F.A.R.M.S. officers have stepped down this month. Ken Porter, our Vice President in charge of Development, has recently accepted a mission call to serve with his wife, Ann, in England. Ann has also been working for F.A.R.M.S. as a secretary. We wish them great success!

Kirk Magleby has served as the manager of the Foundation since its original organization back in 1981. His computer skills and enthusiastic vision have been absolutely essential in designing and developing our mail-order system, videos and media productions, catalogs and graphics, and numerous other things. Even though Kirk's business now does not leave him enough free time to serve as the F.A.R.M.S. manager, we look forward to the continuing volunteer services of Kirk and of his devoted wife, Shannon, as their time allows.

ERRATA SHEET AVAILABLE

A sheet listing printing errors in the first printing of *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* can be had from our office for the asking.

1985 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE UNDER WAY

This month is the F.A.R.M.S. annual membership drive. Please send us names and current addresses of any friends you think should be on our mailing list. We'll send them a couple of free newsletters to introduce them to the Foundation. Tell them you sent us! Since our bulk-mailed items are not forwarded, please send us permanent addresses only—no temporary student or missionary addresses, please.

ARE YOU MOVING?

Be sure to send us an address correction, please! Without it, our bulk mailings will not reach you. By letting us know promptly when you move, you can stay on our list and save us unnecessary costs. Thanks.

PRICE CORRECTION

The new 1985 F.A.R.M.S. Catalog, page 9, erroneously lists James H. Charlesworth's *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I* at \$14.95. The price should read \$25.00. Please note this change. Since this large volume retails from Doubleday at \$35.00, our corrected price is still a considerable discount and only very slightly above our cost.

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