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The Newsletter of  
the Foundation for  
Ancient Research &  
Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

## AN ANCIENT WINDOW

August 1998

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

### A Scientific Look at the Cataclysm in 3 Nephi

As a sign of the Savior's crucifixion, a three-hour cataclysm in the Americas erased entire cities, enshrouded the land in three days of darkness, and transformed "the face of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 8:17). Thanks to an illuminating study by a BYU geologist, certain anomalous aspects of that massive destruction now are understood better than ever before.

In a recent article titled "In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist's View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi" (*BYU Studies* 37/3 [1997-98]), available on the order form, Bart J. Kowallis contends that each of the destructive forces Nephi describes—the terrible storms, thunder, lightning, whirlwinds, shaking of the earth, flooding, fires, burying of cities,

and rending and scattering of rocks—probably emanated from a single geologic event: an explosive volcanic eruption. A cataclysm of this kind would explain the seemingly unprecedented duration, magnitude, and simultaneous onslaught of the multiple disasters, as well as such curious details as the palpable darkness and the "exceedingly dry wood" (8:21) that would not kindle fire.

Kowallis, who heads BYU's geology department, shows that Nephi's catalog of destructive events squares on all counts with scientific fact and many eyewitness accounts of similar devastation wreaked by explosive volcanic eruptions throughout history. Such eruptions occur at continental

*continued on page 5*

### Ten Major Studies Reprinted

FARMS has selected ten papers from among the many interesting and significant contributions to Book of Mormon scholarship and ancient studies published in the last five years. These articles, now available for the first time as separate reprints in the hope they will be read and discussed widely, shed valuable light on the translation, ancient origin, and authenticity of the Book of Mormon and on related matters of language, culture, and doctrine.

John W. Welch's "Doubled, Sealed, Witnessed Documents: From the Ancient World to the Book of Mormon" examines the intriguing ancient legal practice of creating documents in two duplicated parts, subscribing witnesses, and then sealing a portion for future consultation. Reflected in the biblical writings of Jeremiah, a contemporary of Lehi and Nephi, this practice is also implicit in the general design of the sealed and unsealed portions

of the Book of Mormon record and the role of the witnesses who added their attestations to it.

In "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?" Louis C. Midgley details and exposes weaknesses in the four general theories of critics who attempt to discredit Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Book of Mormon. Midgley clearly explains how versions of these theories have evolved since 1830 and suggests that critics today are increasingly more respectful of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith. Royal Skousen, in "Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," gives an up-to-date report on what the original Book of Mormon manuscript reveals about the translation process. Joseph apparently saw twenty to thirty words at once and knew the exact spelling of names. Evidence from the manuscript indicates

*continued on page 5*



The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 119

## The “Lamb of God” in Pre-Christian Texts

One of Nephi’s favorite titles for Jesus Christ was “the Lamb of God.” Forty-four references to “the Lamb” appear in Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 alone. Aside from the Latter-day Saint understanding of a similar reference in Moses 7:47 and perhaps Isaiah 53:7, what evidence supports the Old World origins of this terminology?

In a 1979 article, recently selected as one of the most illuminating studies on the background of the New Testament, J. C. O’Neill contends that the phrase *Lamb of God* was not a Christian invention, as some scholars have supposed, but was rooted in earlier Jewish language and imagery.<sup>1</sup> His main evidence comes from the *Testament of Joseph (TJ)*, a Jewish text probably from the second century B.C. (see facing page for the key text from *TJ* 19).

O’Neill reasons, for example, that no Christian editor would have added the references to the Lamb of God to the Jewish *TJ* 19, because doing so would presuppose two Messiahs (the lion and the lamb figures), a non-Christian tradition that would detract from Christ’s preeminence in the work of salvation.

The ancient roots of *TJ* 19 are further evident when that text is compared with the visions in 1 Nephi and related passages in the Book of Mormon:

1. The author of *TJ* 19 learned of the coming Lamb in a *dream*. Lehi saw in a *dream* the same vision that Nephi saw, a vision featuring the Lamb of God (see 1 Nephi 11:1, 20–21, 24, 27–36).

2. *TJ* 19 describes the scattering of the twelve tribes (compare 1 Nephi 10:12–13; 11:35–12:1).

3. Nephi and the author of *TJ* 19 behold a *virgin*, mother of the Lamb (see 1 Nephi 11:13–21).

4. The “*robe of fine linen*” in *TJ* 19 recalls the virgin’s description in 1 Nephi 11:15 as “beautiful and fair” and the white *robe* in 1 Nephi 8:5 and 14:19.

5. The beautiful mother gives birth to a “*spotless lamb*” in *TJ* 19 and to “the Son of God” in 1 Nephi 11:18.

6. In *TJ* 19 the Lion (Judah?) was found on the Lamb’s left hand and proved ineffective, leaving the Lamb to destroy the beast alone (compare 1 Nephi 11:13, 33; 14:13, 15).

7. Both texts prophesy that evil will be destroyed in the last days (see 1 Nephi 11:36; 13:37; 14:14–17).

8. In *TJ* 19 the faithful rejoice and are exhorted by their father to keep the commandments of God, common themes in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 8:38; 2 Nephi 1:16, 27:30).

9. In *TJ* 19 Joseph’s posterity is to honor Judah and Levi, the Jews in Jerusalem (compare

1 Nephi 14:8; 2 Nephi 3:12; 29:4–6).

10. Both texts recognize that salvation through the Lamb will come “by grace” (2 Nephi 25:23), saving Gentiles and Israelites (see 1 Nephi 13:42–14:2) by taking away the “sin of the world” (*TJ* 19; compare 1 Nephi 11:33).

When John the Baptist announced Christ’s approach with the words “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), he was no doubt using a distinctive messianic title already familiar to the Jews of his day. Although modern Christian readers may consider Nephi’s use of the phrase *Lamb of God* centuries before the Christian era to be anachronistic, the parallels between the Book of Mormon and *TJ* 19 confirm O’Neill’s position on the pre-Christian antiquity of the phrase. Thus John was not the first to use it in reference to Christ; and John and Nephi, as well as Isaiah, may have been drawing on earlier common sources.

### NOTE

1. See J. C. O’Neill, “The Lamb of God in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2 (1979): 2–30. Reprinted in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *New Testament Backgrounds* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), part of a series that collects the best articles from the first fifty issues (1978–93) of *JSNT*.

Based on research by John W. Welch

## The “Lamb of God” in the *Testament of Joseph* (see article on facing page)

Hear, my children, even what I saw as a dream. Twelve harts were grazing and nine were divided and scattered in all the earth. Likewise also the three. . . . And I saw that from Judah was begotten a virgin having a robe of fine linen. And from her was begotten [or “went out”] a spotless lamb, and on his left hand [there was one] like a lion. And all the beasts began to attack him but the lamb conquered them and destroyed them underfoot. And because of him angels and men and all the earth re-

joiced. These things will happen in their season, in the last days. You therefore, my children, keep the commandments of the Lord and honour Judah and Levi, for from them [or “from their seed”] will arise to you the Lamb of God by grace saving all the Gentiles and Israel [or “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, so saving all the Gentiles and Israel”]. For his kingdom is an eternal kingdom which will not be shaken. (Cited in Evans and Porter, eds., *New Testament Backgrounds*, 47.)

### Publicly speaking

## Lectures Spotlight New Research

Since the beginning of the year, nine FARMS brown bag lectures have kept attendees abreast of new developments in ancient research.

On 7 January Romeo H. Hirstov, a Ph.D. candidate in ancient history at the University of Salamanca in Spain, reported on Old World figurine artifacts from Mesoamerica that suggest transoceanic contact in pre-Columbian times.

John L. Sorenson’s lecture on 28 January considered the role of archaeology in Book of Mormon studies. A BYU emeritus professor of anthropology, Sorenson concluded that although some questions remain unanswered, “Book of Mormon geography is linked most persuasively to Mesoamerica.”

Becky Schulthies, a BYU graduate student in ancient Near Eastern studies, reviewed variant readings of 1 Samuel 1–2 in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4QSam<sup>a</sup>. Focusing on Hannah, Samuel’s mother, she discussed the role of women in early Israelite temple worship.

On 25 February, Scott Faulring, FARMS research associate, shared his research indicating that an inscription on the flyleaf of the Bible that Joseph Smith used in his translation of the Bible was written not by Joseph, as previously supposed, but by Oliver Cowdery. Faulring has also found evidence that Fayette, not Harmony, was where Joseph Smith received the visions of Moses in the Pearl of

Great Price; and he identified Emma Smith, Frederick G. Williams, and Joseph Smith Sr. as scribes in the Prophet’s work of translating the Bible.

On 11 March, BYU adjunct professor of statistics John L. Hilton described post-1990 progress in wordprint studies and noted the value of that technology in identifying Hebrew influences in the Book of Mormon.

On 25 March, Diane Wirth, a former BYU art major specializing in Mesoamerican iconography, compared the Egyptian grain god Osiris with his Mesoamerican counterpart Hun-Hunahpu, who is portrayed on Maya vases, stone carvings, and codices. Similarities between the two gods suggest shared cultural views, especially on the resurrection and life after death.

On 8 April, FARMS founder John W. Welch showed how Benjamin’s masterful speech in Mosiah 2–5 was a kind of Israelite covenant-renewal speech that shifted focus from the king to the people, paving the way for the democratic reign of the judges.

In a 29 April lecture, Michael Xu, an assistant professor of Chinese at Texas Christian University, presented examples of striking similarities between ancient Chinese writing and symbols on Mesoamerican Olmec artifacts.

On 9 June, Mark Child, a graduate student in anthropology at Yale and a Nibley Fellow, reported on his research at the Maya ruins at Piedras Negras in Guatemala. His work focuses on the eight sweat baths there to determine why the area has such an uncommon concentration of them.

*Scholar watch*

## Nibley Fellows a Fruitful Investment

Each year FARMS grants fellowships in the name of Hugh Nibley to promising graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in fields of particular interest to FARMS. Three of these rising scholars have since earned doctoral degrees and received appointments at BYU and FARMS. They have already published material through FARMS as Nibley Fellows, and they are now in a position to make further contributions to the work of FARMS.

Allen Christenson finished his dissertation, "Scaling the Mountain of the Ancients: The Altar Piece of Santiago Atitlán," at the University of Texas at Austin in July 1998 and will begin teaching at BYU in the fall. He secured a tenure-track appointment with BYU in the Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature. Christenson studied under the late Linda Schele, a major authority in ancient Maya studies, and is helping to create a CD-ROM of 5600 high-quality scans of her best drawings and photographs, along with identifications and notes. He has also done extensive fieldwork in Guatemala tracing pre-Columbian influences in contemporary Highland Maya ceremonialism and religious iconography. Christenson has published with several journals, including *Proceedings of the Society for Early Historic Archaeology* and *The Journal of Latin American Indian Literature*. He is also working with FARMS on a publication of the *Popol Vuh*, a sacred book of the Quiché Maya.



Brian Hauglid's dissertation, "Al-Tha'labi's *Qışaş al-Anbiya*: Analysis of the Text, Jewish and Christian Elements, Islamization, and Prefiguration of the Prophethood of Muhammad," concerns a tenth-century compilation of pre-Islamic stories, many of which are found in the Bible. Hauglid, who completed his degree at the University of

Utah, explains that "this text is in chronological narrative form and begins with the creation and includes many unique apocryphal stories dealing with such figures as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus." He has received a one-year teaching appointment from BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture. His research plans include examining four thousand pages of Christian Arabic manuscripts and updating research on the Joseph of Egypt garment. Hauglid has published several items with FARMS, including selections in *Temples of the Ancient World* and the *FARMS Review of Books*. Currently he is coediting a volume on the book of Abraham.



John Gee earned his Ph.D. from Yale University with a dissertation titled "The Requirements of Ritual Purity in Ancient Egypt." He will soon join FARMS as an assistant research professor and will coordinate research on the book of Abraham. Gee will also work on an electronically searchable database of a collection of texts and images of ancient Coptic and other Egyptian texts. Gee, one of the few members of the LDS Church today with a doctorate in Egyptology, has published extensively with FARMS, including selections in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* and *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*.



FARMS is excited to see the fruits of this program as these new scholars complete their career preparation at universities across the country and overseas and become uniquely qualified to contribute to research related to the Book of Mormon.

## Ten Major Studies (continued from page 1)

that the translation was tightly controlled and was revealed to Joseph Smith through interpreters.

Kevin L. Barney's "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon" discusses numerous word pairs that frequently appear in Hebrew, in Ugaritic, and in the Book of Mormon. This extensive study is the most comprehensive treatment available on this illuminating subject. John W. Welch focuses on yet another aspect of ancient language in "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" Found often in the Book of Mormon, chiasmus is a form of literary parallelism that serves many purposes in focusing readers on the intended message of the author and accenting cognitive and aesthetic values. Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon also indicates multiple authorship, consistency with an original Hebrew text, and the precision of Joseph Smith's translation.

In "Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5," Wilford M. Hess, Daniel J. Fairbanks, John W. Welch, and Jonathan K. Driggs meticulously compare the botanical and horticultural ingredients of Zenos's elaborate allegory with ancient and modern botanical knowledge about raising good olive trees. They explain the etymological meaning and cognates of the word *olive* and trace the records of olive husbandry throughout the Middle East. The authors conclude that the detailed allegory of the house of Israel recorded in Jacob 5 accurately corresponds to what is known about olive cultivation.

In "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," John L. Sorenson contends that the narrative in the Book of Mormon fits geographically and culturally into the region of southern Mexico and northern Central America. In the most comprehensive analysis available, he compares the variety of genres in the Book of Mormon with the surviving literature of ancient Mesoamerica, including records of lineage, accounts of origins and migrations, poetry, and prophetic writing.

James E. Smith's "How Many Nephites? The Book of Mormon at the Bar of Demography" expertly examines criticisms that Nephite population sizes in the Book of Mormon are unrealistic. Smith points out that estimating Nephite population is difficult because the term *Nephite*, like *Israel*, carried different meanings over time. He suggests that puzzling surges of population growth, like those

evident in the Book of Mormon, are actually a hallmark of ancient record keeping and its inherent demographic imprecision. Smith concludes that the Book of Mormon nevertheless provides a realistic picture of the Nephites, a population "relatively small in numbers and immersed in a sea of other peoples."

In "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," John A. Tvedtnes draws from ancient texts and traditions to describe the special outer garments worn by Adam, Nimrod, Jacob, Joseph of Egypt, Noah, the priests of Aaron, angels, and Jesus Christ. Because this priestly clothing was considered to be divine in origin, it gave the wearer authority to act as a representative of God. The clothing, passed from father to son, was an outward expression of inner purity and priesthood power.

Noel B. Reynolds, in "The True Points of My Doctrine," identifies three crucial Book of Mormon passages that define the true gospel of Jesus Christ. He comments on other passages that further clarify six basic elements of the gospel: faith, repentance, baptism by water, baptism by fire, enduring to the end, and the acquisition of eternal life.

Followers of FARMS research over the years will find that these ten selected works add impressively to our linguistic, cultural, and doctrinal understanding of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. FARMS is pleased to make these recent studies readily available to all readers. These outstanding reprints are representative of the ongoing research encouraged by FARMS. They are sold separately and appear on the enclosed order form.

## Scientific Look at 3 Nephi

(continued from page 1)

"hot spots" and at subduction zones (where the earth's tectonic, or crustal, plates collide and buckle) when viscous magma plugs a volcano's vent and enormous pressure builds until the mountain collapses or blows its top. Significantly, an extremely active volcanic belt passes through southern Mexico and Central America, the area that many LDS scholars agree is most likely the heartland of Book of Mormon events.

*continued on page 6*

## Scientific Look at 3 Nephi

(continued from page 5)

Whereas even large tectonic earthquakes last at most a few minutes, violent volcanic eruptions typically are preceded by frequent earthquakes and explosions as the vents gradually become cleared of debris. Nephi's report of constant shaking for three hours is a reasonable amount of time for the initial stages of a volcanic eruption. Although a major volcanic eruption can transform landscapes over vast areas—a scenario described by Nephi—Kowallis notes that available geologic evidence, as well as a careful reading of the Book of Mormon, challenges the interpretation that the great destruction affected the whole earth or reshaped all of the Western Hemisphere. Rather, he argues, Nephi obviously was referring to *his* whole earth, or the geographically restricted area inhabited by Book of Mormon peoples.

A striking feature of Kowallis's study is its many eyewitness reports of explosive volcanic eruptions. These detailed excerpts support Nephi's account of a barrage of destructive forces unleashed simultaneously. For example, an exploding volcano releases an enormous, dense, fast-moving "blast cloud" of superheated gases and even hotter ash that rolls down the mountain and outward along the ground for miles, obliterating everything in its path. Balls of lightning and other curious electrical phenomena, along with fierce windstorms, thunder, quaking, and rending noises, accompany the tumult.

The firsthand descriptions of such searing maelstroms observed during the eruptions of Italy's Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79, Java's Krakatoa in 1883, and Martinique's Mount Pelée in 1902 are stunning. Of the latter eruption, a witness on board a ship approaching the St. Pierre harbor reported: "I saw St. Pierre . . . blotted out by one great flash of fire. Nearly 40,000 people were killed at once. . . . The side of the volcano was ripped out, and there hurled straight towards us a solid wall of flame . . . that swept off masts and smokestacks . . . and shriveled and set fire to everything it touched." The terrific whirlwinds and dry storms caused by explosive volcanic eruptions may account for the dry wood noted in 3 Nephi 8:21 and observed as a result of the Krakatoa eruption. That fires could not be lit may have been due to a heavy fall of ash or to suffocating gases.

Kowallis concludes that the 3 Nephi account is "remarkable for its detail and accuracy . . . and would have been impossible for an uneducated man to have published in 1830," when "geology was a science still in its infancy."

This absorbing study is amply documented and enriched by more than a dozen dramatic photographs. Although the author stops short of linking geologic evidence of the cataclysm with specific Mesoamerican locations, he believes the evidence is there, awaiting discovery as further work fleshes out the geologic record contained in the earth's strata.

## INSIGHTS AN ANCIENT WINDOW

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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 affiliated with 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.

Catalog Number			
KOW-98	Bart J. Kowallis, "In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist's View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi," reprinted from <i>BYU Studies</i> 37/3 (1997-98), 55 pp.		\$4.00
WEL-98	John W. Welch, "Doubled, Sealed, Witnessed Documents: From the Ancient World to the Book of Mormon," reprinted from <i>Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson</i> , 28 pp.		\$2.00
MID-97	Louis C. Midgley, "Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?" reprinted from <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited</i> , 20 pp.		\$2.00
SKO-97c	Royal Skousen, "Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," reprinted from <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited</i> , 33 pp.		\$3.00
BAR-95	Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," reprinted from <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 4/2 (1995), 33 pp.		\$3.00
WEL-97c	John W. Welch, "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" reprinted from <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited</i> , 14 pp.		\$2.00
HES-94	Wilford M. Hess, Daniel J. Fairbanks, John W. Welch, and Jonathan K. Driggs, "Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5," reprinted from <i>The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5</i> , 39 pp.		\$3.00
SOR-97c	John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," reprinted from <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited</i> , 66 pp.		\$4.00
SMI-97	James E. Smith, "How Many Nephites? The Book of Mormon at the Bar of Demography," reprinted from <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited</i> , 19 pp.		\$2.00
TVE-94	John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," reprinted from <i>Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism</i> , 29 pp.		\$3.00
REY-96	Noel B. Reynolds, "The True Points of My Doctrine," reprinted from <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 4/2 (1995), 16 pp.		\$2.00
<b>Recent FARMS publications</b>			
REV-98a	Daniel C. Peterson, ed., <i>FARMS Review of Books</i> 10/1 (1998), 393 pp.		\$8.95
REY-97b	Noel B. Reynolds, ed., <i>Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins</i> , 1997, 574 pp., hardbound, retail <del>\$19.95</del>		\$15.95
J-97b	Stephen D. Ricks, ed., <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 6/2 (1997), 274 pp.		\$8.95
SOR-98	John L. Sorenson, <i>Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life</i> , 1998, 249 pp., hardbound, large format, fully illustrated, full color, retail <del>\$39.95</del>		\$31.95
W&R-98	John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., <i>King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"</i> , 1998, 679 pp., hardbound, retail <del>\$24.95</del>		\$19.95
BIT-98	Davis Bitton, ed., <i>Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson</i> , 1998, 565 pp., hardbound, retail <del>\$23.95</del>		\$18.95

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## Contributions of FARMS Members Still Crucial

As FARMS has become part of Brigham Young University, some of the faithful members of FARMS have asked if their support is still important to the Foundation. The answer is a resounding yes! Just in the financial area alone, membership fees (which we have also called subscriptions) are crucial to the research and publications of the Foundation. The university contributes less than 20 percent of the Foundation's annual operating budget—a very welcome contribution, but obviously not enough to keep FARMS and its projects running. We still must rely on membership fees, donations, and the sale of publications to support ongoing research.

And the less-tangible contributions you make are equally important. The ideas, questions, friendly criticism, encouragement, volunteered labor, and other forms of moral support you give help keep the work of the Foundation alive and lively.

We hope you find that the benefits of membership flow both ways—that you receive as much as you give. To see if this is so, we recently surveyed a random sample of FARMS members on a number of issues, and we thought you might enjoy knowing what we learned about how some of you view FARMS and your association with it. We also hope these comments will motivate you to share with us your suggestions on how we might serve you better, so that you will continue to feel that your FARMS membership is worthwhile.

In response to questions about what our readers find most valuable, the most frequent answer was information on new research, especially material supporting the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. We have always assumed that most FARMS readers were interested in research updates and the resulting scriptural insights, so it was gratifying to receive this response. We will continue to try to make *INSIGHTS* and the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* the best sources of information on Book of Mormon research.

The second most frequent response was appreciation for the summaries of new publications featured in *INSIGHTS*, although a few readers felt that those summaries were too self-promotional. One reader most enjoyed “the chance to preview products (books, papers) in brief before buying,” and another liked receiving “information about books to help decide if I want to purchase.” In each article

about a new publication, we try to give enough information not only to help people decide whether to purchase but also to give readers some new ideas and information about the topics covered by the publication, so that they will learn something by reading the article even if they decide not to purchase. Unfortunately, the comments about self-promotion, even though they were from a minority of respondents, indicate that we don't always get it right—so we will try harder.

Many other readers like the notices and summaries of lectures, conferences, and brown bag seminars; readers who live too far from BYU to attend such presentations especially appreciate the summaries. A few respondents were concerned that they are not notified of these events early enough. We will try to give the earliest notice we can. To some extent this problem stems from our *INSIGHTS* publication schedule: if we don't learn of an upcoming event until after the newsletter is published, the notice is delayed until the next issue. For FARMS members with internet access, we will post such notices on our website upon receiving them, which should help alleviate this concern.

Some readers were worried that the affiliation of FARMS with BYU might somehow limit the Foundation's autonomy or dilute its scholarship. We want to reassure you that the BYU administration, from the board of trustees on down, has been wholly supportive of our mission and, in every instance when they conceivably could have put some type of bureaucratic damper on our freedom to operate, they have instead encouraged our creativity and scholarship. We are very optimistic about the benefits of our affiliation with BYU and hope that over the coming months and years we will demonstrate to you by the quality of the research and publications we sponsor that accepting the invitation from BYU was a good choice.

You are a very loyal group, and it is clear from your comments that you support FARMS because you want to support research on the Book of Mormon. Still, we confess to thoroughly enjoying such comments as “I love your organization!” “Your services and products are invaluable!” and (from a younger reader) “I totally loved it when someone introduced me to FARMS!” We will do our best to live up to your expectations.