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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

# INSIGHTS

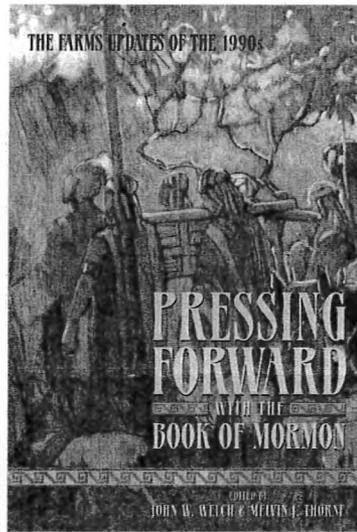
A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

August 1999

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

## Research Updates Gathered in New FARMS Book

The past two decades have seen an explosion of research on the Book of Mormon by faithful LDS scholars. For many years a regular feature of the FARMS newsletter has been a Research Update reporting on some aspect of this research. *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, edited by John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, presents the FARMS Research Updates of the 1990s, plus some similar short notes from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, in a handy new collection (see the enclosed order form).



Aimed at a general audience, these Updates are brief, easy-to-read reports of new research on the Book of Mormon. As the new book's introduction explains, Updates set forth the essence of a research topic and new discoveries from a variety of fields that bear on it. They tell of intriguing ideas and developments that have emerged from exploring the Book of Mormon from many perspectives.

Many of these Updates are the result of collaboration between scholars, and no FARMS Research

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## FARMS Publishes Abridged Book on King Benjamin's Speech

King Benjamin's speech in the first six chapters of Mosiah is one of the masterpieces of Christian literature. In 1996 FARMS sponsored a symposium on this classic text. The papers that were presented (published as *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"*) constituted the most substantial collection of studies on this powerful and fascinating speech.

*King Benjamin's Speech Made Simple* is an abridgment of the 677-page original volume. Both books were edited by John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks. Prepared with the general reader in mind, the streamlined paperback presents the essential contents of its predecessor, condensing the information for readers who want to move quickly to

the meat of the authors' conclusions. Those who wish to examine the full array of evidence behind these studies will want to return to the full volume. For a succinct presentation, however, readers will find *King Benjamin's Speech Made Simple* to be an ideal approach.

In 11 stimulating studies, the authors examine



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*Publicly speaking*

## FARMS Researchers Present Papers at Apologetics Conference

Four members of the FARMS staff spoke at an apologetics conference held 17–19 June 1999 in Ben Lomond, California. The conference was sponsored by the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) and addressed the theme “Mormonism and Early Christianity.”

Daniel C. Peterson, chairman of the FARMS board and director of the FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART), was the keynote speaker. His address, titled “What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem? Apostasy and Restoration in the Big Picture,” discussed similarities between the mindset of Latter-day Saints and that of Jews and early Christians before they became hellenized. Peterson went beyond detailed specifics to focus on how these groups are similar in their overall approaches to religion. For example, early Christians focused on behavior rather than theology, and Latter-day Saints do much the same. Expanding on that idea, he discussed how the Sermon on the Mount was the centerpiece of the early Christian faith and noted that it was not until several centuries later that the Nicene Creed, a theologically oriented statement, was adopted, reflecting a shift of emphasis in the Christian faith. Peterson also noted that the LDS Church has historians rather than theologians, a situation similar to that in the scriptures, which relate historical events rather than debate theology.

John A. Tvedtnes, FARMS associate director of research, discussed “Early Christian and Jewish Rituals Related to Temple Practices.” Citing a number of early Jewish and Christian documents, including pseudepigraphic and apocryphal works, texts from the Nag Hammadi library, lectures from Cyril of Jerusalem, and Gnostic and Ethiopic Christian documents, Tvedtnes discussed sources that mention ancient initiations, the clasping of hands while revealing secrets, secret words, prayer circles, guardians at the heavenly veils, and entering the presence of the Lord.

John Gee, assistant research professor at FARMS, spoke on “The Corruption of Scripture in the Second Century.” He presented three main points: (1) the scriptures of the early-second-century Christians

were different from the scriptures of the late-second-century Christians; (2) each second-century Christian sect accused the other Christian sects of having corrupted the scriptures; and (3) only one New Testament manuscript potentially dates before this time of corruption, but it only contains 10 words. Gee concluded that virtually all New Testament manuscripts were thus written after the second-century corruption of scripture, a situation that is corroborated in Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 13.

Matthew Roper, a research assistant at FARMS, delivered two presentations. The first, which compared early and medieval Christian traditions about Adam and Eve with LDS teachings, highlighted significant correspondences regarding the creation, the fall, and Adam and Eve’s struggles with Satan. In his second presentation, which noted positive correlations concerning salvation for the dead as taught in early Christianity and by the Latter-day Saints, Roper defended the LDS doctrine against certain evangelical criticisms.

FAIR intends to publish the proceedings of this conference. Those interested in obtaining a copy of the book can watch for further details by visiting FAIR’s website at [www.fair-lds.org](http://www.fair-lds.org).

*From other publishers*

## New Journal Studies Ancient Transoceanic Travel

The inaugural issue of a new scholarly journal of interest to students of the Book of Mormon has recently become available. Volume 1 of *Pre-Columbiana: A Journal of Long-Distance Contacts* is a double issue (June and December 1998) of 160 pages. The journal is the product of two distinct streams of interest in the topic of ancient transoceanic travel. On one hand, the key contributors are senior academic scholars who have a long record of research and publication on this subject. Believing there is substantial evidence for such early voyages, these people have long contradicted the orthodox view that no significant contacts from the Old World

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## New Journal (continued from page 2)

reached the Americas to seed or affect New World cultures. On the other hand, the funding and sponsoring organization, Early Sites Research Society West, combines the efforts of groups of mainly amateur researchers who are anxious to see the same problem studied.

Editor Stephen C. Jett, of the University of California at Davis, says in a policy statement that "*Pre-Columbiana* is an international interdisciplinary journal of culture history dedicated to the study of questions of long-distance movements of people and culture before the time of Columbus's first voyage to the Western Hemisphere in 1492." This focus of study, long out of favor among conventional scholars, has needed a proper scholarly outlet whereby findings and discussion of this "intellectually and politically controversial question" can be published at a high standard of scholarship (all articles are reviewed by competent scholars before they are accepted for publication). Among the fields of science and scholarship represented in the first issue are geography, archaeology, anthropology, art history, intellectual history, linguistics, epigraphy, and nautical history.

Latter-day Saints are particularly interested in studies on this topic because the Book of Mormon reports three transoceanic journeys—those by the Jaredites, the Mulekites, and Lehi's party.

Jett, a widely published geographer, is supported by an editorial board of experts from the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia of Mexico and the universities of Calgary, California-Irvine, Marquette, Texas, Oregon, Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Montreal, and BYU.

Some startling new material is included in the first issue. Jett reports on evidence for very early navigation in the Pacific. Carl L. Johannessen presents hitherto unpublished evidence for the presence of native American crop plants, peanuts, corn, the sunflower, a type of squash, chili pepper, amaranth, the yam bean, and possibly the lima bean in China and India (some of his research was funded by FARMS). Paul Shao of Iowa State University presents new information about the relationships between early Chinese art and American art styles. David H. Kelley shows that a South American word for "yam" was apparently borrowed into Polynesia, that a word for "watercraft" relates the same two geographical areas, and that

other mythic and iconographic concepts also were likely shared. Linguist Mary LeCron Foster of the University of California at Berkeley uses new methods to identify 55 terms or concepts that are systematically related in Arabic, Egyptian, Quechuan (the Inca language), Hanunoo (Philippines), and Iban (Borneo); these relationships seem to owe to "overseas colonization by nautical explorers." Mary Richie Key of the University of California at Irvine musters new data to support her hypothesis that language similarities between Austronesian (Oceanic) and South American languages are due to ancient migrations.

In the book review section, Betty J. Meggers of the Smithsonian Institution considers John L. Sorenson and Martin Raish's massive *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans* (FARMS, Research Press, 1996) as providing "an unparalleled view of the theoretical issues and magnitude of evidence for and against pre-Columbian transoceanic contacts." In the bibliographic section that follows the reviews, Sorenson, the book review and bibliographic editor for the journal, publishes 43 new abstracts expanding on the material in the 1996 volume.

Various smaller items are also published in this inaugural issue by authors such as H. Mike Xu, Mario A. Pérez Campa, (the late) William R. McGlone, Phil Leonard, and others.

The first four issues of *Pre-Columbiana* are available at an introductory rate of \$25.00 from ESRS West, P.O. Box 4175, Independence MO 64050.

## Research Updates

(continued from page 1)

Update has been released without close scrutiny by several scholars. In many cases the Updates have been the leading edge of new discoveries that were subsequently developed further and published in scholarly articles and books. Not all scripture research projects lend themselves to short treatment as an Update, of course, but in many cases a complex project can be opened up to the public through this avenue. And many times these Updates remain the most useful, concise statements available on a topic or issue.

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## Research Updates (continued from page 3)

In many ways, the Updates have changed the face of Book of Mormon research. No longer are new scholarly insights into the Book of Mormon held in remote corners of cluttered file cabinets. This commitment to making Book of Mormon research available to the general public has always been one of the missions of FARMS and can be seen in the new format of the last two issues of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.

*Pressing Forward* will interest all people who want to know what's new in Book of Mormon research. The Updates it contains will be informative to inquisitive minds—both old and young—who want to know the questions that scholars are asking and answering. They will appeal to people who enjoy thinking about novel approaches and prospecting for new information. They will appeal to all who believe the Book of Mormon and want to know more about its messages, language, and setting; its astonishing details, miraculous origins, and incomparable mission.

Most people who study the Book of Mormon, including the scholars who study it intensively, believe that they have barely scratched the surface. The richness and complexity of that book offer an inexhaustible wealth of understanding that rewards "pressing forward" with continuing research. The ultimate goal of sharing this research with the world is to help all students of the scriptures to "press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ" (2 Nephi 31:20).

## King Benjamin's Speech

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Benjamin's classic speech from many angles, viewing it as a manual for Christian discipleship, a coronation and covenant-renewal text, an ancient farewell address, part of a traditional religious celebration, a prophetic lawsuit, and a masterful oration of stunning structural complexity. These approaches and several others yield new insights and perspectives regarding the purpose and meaning of Benjamin's classic address that Mormon was inspired to preserve and pass on to our day for our benefit.

This volume will acquaint general readers with one of the greatest religious leaders of all time, one whose wisdom, inspired teachings, and parting testimony invite studious attention and lasting admiration. This book is a handy resource, spotlighting and making simple the profound meanings and intriguing complexities of Benjamin's carefully chosen words. It can be purchased using the enclosed order form.

# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

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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 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.