



# Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

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<http://farms.byu.edu>

## BYU and Institute Projects Showcased at AAR/SBL Meetings

BYU and Institute scholars gave presentations at all five sessions of the Rocky Mountain–Great Plains regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature on 26–27 March 2004. Because several sessions took place on the BYU campus for the first time, and because one-third of the 51 presenters were BYU-affiliated scholars (8 of them closely associated with the Institute), the event was an ideal opportunity for the university to showcase its contributions to religious scholarship.

According to Thomas Wayment, a BYU assistant professor of ancient scripture who chaired the event, many AAR/SBL officers at the national level (such as the current president and director of SBL) come from

the Rocky Mountain–Great Plains region. “In this regard, it was an important move on our part to bring the regional meeting here—so that leading scholars from around the nation could have the opportunity to see the type of work that is going on here at BYU,” Wayment said. “To say it mildly, they were very impressed with what is being done here on campus.”

The Institute’s work of digitally imaging ancient manuscripts was one of two BYU projects that caught the attention of participants. “One attendee (a national officer) was so impressed that she promised to promote the work of BYU at the national level,” said Wayment, who added that the informative presentation further solidified BYU’s already-strong position in that field. The other project that attracted attention was the Joseph Smith Papers Project of the Joseph Fielding

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## ‘Binding of Isaac’ Focus of FARMS Conference, Lecture

### *Akedah* Conference

Genesis 22 records that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac upon an altar but intervened at the last moment, providing instead a ram for the actual sacrifice and greatly blessing Abraham for passing what has come to be viewed as the ultimate test of obedience to God’s will. The account, simple enough in outline, is nevertheless seen by different religious traditions as profoundly symbolic and even enigmatic, its moral and religious implications having spawned numerous interpretations.

Known as the *Akedah* (Hebrew, “the binding”), this dramatic episode is of central importance to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It is of no less consequence to Latter-day Saint Christians, whose scriptural canon, though it does very little to elu-

cidate the *Akedah* beyond what is known from the biblical account, supports that account while providing significant new revelation on Abraham’s ministry and stature in religious history in general.

Latter-day Saint researchers who have studied the *Akedah* shared their findings at a conference held at Brigham Young University on 6 March 2004. Sponsored by FARMS and BYU’s Religious Studies Center, the six-hour event titled “Genesis 22: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on the Binding of Isaac” began with a showing of the film *Akedah (The Binding)* and then featured 14 presentations in five sessions.

In opening remarks, Brian M. Hauglid, an assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU, noted that Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke of “relevance in antiquity” and that the clear relevance of the *Akedah* was that Abraham’s obedience to God in the near sacrifice of Isaac is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Son of God (Jacob 4:5). From that common ground, the presenters probed the *Akedah* from many angles,

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## Patrick Henry, Gideon, and the Book of Mormon

Historian Richard L. Bushman, responding to accusations that the Book of Mormon contains “evidence of nineteenth-century American political culture,” concluded that in fact “most of the principles traditionally associated with the American Constitution are slighted or disregarded altogether” in the book. “So many of the powerful intellectual influences operating on Joseph Smith failed to touch the Book of Mormon.”<sup>1</sup>

For example, Bushman noted that patriotic orations and writings in Joseph’s time depicted the American Revolution as “a struggle of heroes against oppressors, a brave people versus a tyrant king.” The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, consistently describes groups of people being delivered from bondage not through heroic resistance or confrontation but by flight into the wilderness facilitated by the power of God.<sup>2</sup> Whereas 1820s patriotic rhetoric portrayed an enlightened people overthrowing wicked monarchs, Book of Mormon peoples generally clamor for a king;<sup>3</sup> and when the monarchy is abandoned, it is a king (Mosiah<sub>2</sub>) who instigates the change.<sup>4</sup> Bushman also argued that a careful reading of the Book of Mormon reveals that its seemingly democratic elements bear little resemblance

to American ideals: elections are rare, the separation of powers does not exist, there is no written constitution, the concept of “no taxation without representation” is absent, and hereditary succession prevails, even among the “judges.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the heroes of the American Revolution is Patrick Henry, revered for the stirring declaration “Give me liberty, or give me death!” The Book of Mormon, however, turns this sentiment on its ear. When the people of King Limhi are threatened by a much stronger Lamanite army, Gideon, the king’s captain, counsels, “Let us pacify the king [of the Lamanites] . . . ; for it is better that we should be in bondage than that we should lose our lives” (Mosiah 20:22). King Limhi apparently agrees that there are worse things than bondage, for later he tells Ammon that “it is better that we be slaves to the Nephites than to pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites” (Mosiah 7:15).

Joseph Smith, an impressionable child during the War of 1812 whose ancestors had fought in the Revolutionary War, would have imbibed the democratic and libertarian sentiments of his age. Indeed, in 1843 he told a congregation, “It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul.

Civil and religious liberty were diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees.”<sup>6</sup>

His actions as well as his words indicate that his personal philosophy was more in tune with Patrick Henry’s than with Gideon’s or King Limhi’s. For example, he sent Zion’s Camp, an armed force of 200 men, to restore the exiled Saints to their homes in Jackson County, Missouri; he supported resistance to the Missouri militia during the hostilities of 1838; he organized and led a well-drilled military body, the Nauvoo Legion, to protect the rights of his followers; and with apparent foresight of his ultimate fate, he tried to escape to the West rather than submit to imprisonment among hostile foes.

If Joseph Smith fabricated the Book of Mormon, as some critics contend, it is hard to believe that he would have written with approval the words attributed to Gideon in Mosiah 20:22, or even those of King Limhi in Mosiah 7:15. It is far easier to believe that he was simply translating the words of other men, whose political sentiments were much different from his own. 

By Ross Geddes

### Notes

1. Richard L. Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution,” *BYU Studies* 17/1 (Autumn 1976): 3, 16, 20.

2. *Ibid.*, 6–10.
3. Bushman gives as examples Nephi<sub>1</sub> (2 Nephi 5:18; 6:2), Mosiah<sub>1</sub> (Omni 1:12, 19), Zeniff (Mosiah 7:9; cf. 19:26), and Alma<sub>1</sub> (Mosiah 23:6).
4. Bushman, “American Revolution,” 10–14. For earlier studies of the institution of Nephite judgeship, see John W. Welch, “Democratizing Forces in King Benjamin’s Speech,” in John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–26; and John A. Tvedtnes, “King Mosiah and the Judgeship,” *Insights*, November 2000.
5. Bushman, “American Revolution,” 14–17.
6. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 229; punctuation normalized.

## Lectures on Christianity in the Middle East

In March the Institute cosponsored a lecture series at Brigham Young University titled “Christianity in the Middle East.” The series provided a historical overview of the eastward spread of Christianity into the pagan Near East, a subject largely neglected in religious and socio-cultural studies. Over many centuries, Christian groups maintained a presence in the region, leaving behind a notable literary, monumental, and artistic legacy that is increasingly being recognized as an important part of the world’s cultural heritage.

### Early Syriac Christianity

Dr. Lucas Van Rompay, professor of Eastern Christianity and director of Duke University’s Center for Late Ancient Studies, kicked off the series on 10 March with a lecture titled “Early Syriac Christianity.” Focusing on the pre-Islamic period (200–600 AD), when Syriac Christianity absorbed aspects of Greek culture, Van Rompay showed slides of mosaics and wall paintings that blend Syriac and Greek elements, such as script in both languages. Notably, one wall painting features Abgar Ukkama and the Roman emperor Constantine, supposedly the first two rulers to convert to Christianity. Tradition holds that King Abgar of Edessa, a Mesopotamian city that became a center of Christianity in the fourth century AD, exchanged letters with Jesus, resulting in the conversion of Abgar and his entire city. This tradition, along with Greek language and philosophy, was the primary shaping influence of Syriac Christianity, Van Rompay said.

### Christianity under Islam

On 17 March, Dr. Sidney H. Griffith, professor of Semitic languages at The Catholic University of America, spoke on the topic “Christianity under Islam in the Pre-Modern World.” Griffith is a specialist in Syriac and Arabic Christianity, and he chairs the advisory board for BYU’s Eastern Christian Texts series. He began by noting that the Qur’an, which presumes familiarity with the Old Testament and related lore, offers a critique of Christianity, referring to Christians vaguely as “people of the book” and viewing Jesus Christ as one of God’s messengers but not as his Son. He then spoke of the challenges that Christianity posed to Islam in the pre-Modern period (from the time of Mohammed to the Crusades). For example, after the Abassid revolt in AD 750, Christians in the Middle East gradually became enculturated into the Islamic community. Muslim scholars took notice of the three primary Eastern Christian groups (Melchites, Jacobites, Nestorians) and set about trying to refute their beliefs.

After describing the culture of Arabic-speaking Christians and the development of Christian theology at the hands of Christian-Arab theologians, Griffith focused on the plight of Christians living under Islamic rule: deprivation, subservience, and requirements to pay a tax for protection, to wear distinctive clothing, and to refrain from expressing their faith publicly and seeking converts among Muslims. Their lives of hardship led them to see the Islamic conquest in terms of “the apocalyptic mode” of the book of Daniel, he said—as evidence of God’s punishment of Christians who must await their deliverance. Griffith characterized Christian influence in the pre-Modern Islamic world as one of “diminution” until the irruption of Christian missionaries during the Crusades.

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## Looking Forward to 25 More Years of FARMS

*This is an excerpt from a dinner speech that FARMS founder John W. Welch gave to members of the FARMS Development Council on 19 March 2004.*

An evening like this, which begins our commemoration of the 25th anniversary of FARMS, makes me think back to our founding days in 1979. Keeping alive the memory of foundation stories, of creation accounts, is part of keeping on track for the future.

It was exactly a quarter of a century ago that three lawyers (Lew Cramer, Clark Waddoups, and I) were driving up Sixth Street in Los Angeles to get on the Harbor Freeway on our way home. I was practicing tax law at the time, and in retrospect I think it no accident that I had developed some expertise in organizing and advising tax exempt organizations. I was about to file the articles of incorporation for a new foundation that could make Book of Mormon research available to people all over the world and that could facilitate the good work of promising Latter-day Saint scholars. Well, all we needed was a name. As we pulled onto the freeway, the name “FARMS” was hatched. It got a good laugh at first, but none of us could forget it, nor has the general public.

FARMS was built on several values and principles: on fulfilling real needs; on dreaming and exploration; on unselfishness and generosity; on goodwill, faith, cooperative independence, commitment to quality, and reliability; on productivity and service; and on true sincerity. These values and principles remain in place today and will carry FARMS into its next quarter century.

Why are 25 more years of FARMS needed? For one thing, the original needs that called for the creation of FARMS still exist, and with the world’s information explosion, those needs are more pressing than ever.

In 25 years FARMS has seen great success: the FARMS newsletter, research updates, papers, books, videos, research projects, journals, reviews,

and conferences reach thousands of people. But these items should reach millions.

Hundreds of students have been trained and employed, building a new generation of Latter-day Saint researchers. But these numbers should be in the thousands.

Our gathering of information, outreach programs, membership services, and answers to frequently asked questions have been outstanding. But there is much more work yet to do.

Our donors and volunteers have made all of this possible, often miraculously so. But the work has just begun.

We continue to expand our robust Web site and database of readily available information. Major research projects on Abraham, Alma, the New Testament, Mesoamerican chronology, chiasmus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are partway finished and need acceleration.

Nibley Fellows (a host of rising scholars whose postgraduate education is supported by the Institute) are growing in expertise. An organization called the Student Society for Ancient Studies has been formed at Brigham Young University. The next generation needs to be nourished and nurtured.

A line of publications is coming down the pike. The beautiful *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* has a backlog of submissions that would justify publication three times, not just twice, per year. Unfinished additions to the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* remain to be published. John Sorenson still has files full of materials to be processed. Work is yet to be done by Royal Skousen on the manuscripts of the Book of Mormon, to mention only a few.

Latter-day Saint religious studies programs are springing up at various universities, notably at Claremont Graduate University and Utah State University. One must wonder, Who will teach the Book of Mormon at such institutions?

People still suggest that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon as a pious fraud, that he somehow formulated the story and then dictated it to Oliver Cowdery. But just imagine the challenge of not only memorizing the 30 names that appear

in the genealogy at the beginning of the book of Ether, but then repeating those 30 in exactly the opposite order, in the process of telling the history of the Jaredites in the body of that book!

In the February 2004 issue of the *Ensign*, President Gordon B. Hinckley said of the Book of Mormon: “The evidence for its truth, for its validity in a world that is prone to demand evidence, lies not in archaeology or anthropology, *though these may be helpful to some*. It lies not in word research or historical analysis, *though these may be confirmatory*. . . . Reasonable people may sincerely question its origin; but those who have read it prayerfully have come to know by a power beyond their natural

senses that it is true” (“Four Cornerstones of Faith,” 6; emphasis added). As it has always been, the purpose of FARMS in its next 25 years is not to take the place of spiritual testimony, but to create a helpful, confirmatory atmosphere in which the spirit of truth may breathe.

Where will the Lord take this work in the next 25 years? We can no more answer that question today than we could have predicted in 1979 the extraordinary experience of FARMS in its first quarter century. But if the next 25 years are anything close to the first, it promises to be an extremely interesting, valuable, and gratifying time. I am eager to see what the future will bring. 📖

### FARMS Celebrates 25 Years of Research

To celebrate our 25th anniversary, FARMS is holding a banquet on 22 October 2004 at Thanksgiving Point, Lehi, Utah. The evening will start with a reception at 6:15 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$50 per person. Call us at 1-800-327-6715 for reservations and further details.

## Lectures cont. from page 3

### History of Eastern Christianity

The final lecture in the series, on 31 March, was by Bishop Mar Bawai Soro of the Assyrian Church of the East. Six years ago, Bishop Soro was instrumental in helping to open a dialogue between CPART (part of the Institute) personnel and ecclesiastical authorities overseeing the archives of the Vatican Apostolic Library in Rome. This led to an agreement between Brigham Young University and the Vatican authorizing CPART to digitize 28 ancient Syriac documents from the library’s excellent collections.

Bishop Soro began his lecture by acknowledging the strength of his ties with BYU and CPART and then gave a brief history of Eastern Christianity from its origins in the Judeo-Christian tradition as developed in Mesopotamia. Syriac Christianity stemmed from Jerusalem after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, he said. In Syriac Christianity one can find a cultural, spiri-

tual, linguistic snapshot of the same society that Jesus and his apostles experienced. In the third and fourth centuries, Aristotelian logic, philosophy, and ethics began to be translated into Syriac in Syria and northern Mesopotamia by the Syriac Christians. After the rise and establishment of Islam, a number of the caliphs became interested in Greek philosophy and absorbed vast quantities of Greek learning into Arabic, often by Christian translators. Later in the Middle Ages, Greek philosophy, augmented by Arabic learning, was introduced to the West in translations from Arabic to Latin, leading to the European Enlightenment.

He concluded by noting two events that are bringing the scattered Christians of Syriac persuasions together. First is a 30-year-old initiative of the Archdiocese of Vienna called Pro Oriente—a dialogue between the Western and Eastern Churches. The second is the BYU initiative with the Vatican library, making ancient Syriac Christian manuscripts available for study by scholars all over the world. 📖

## AAR/SBL cont. from page 1

Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History. This research intrigued non-Latter-day Saint scholars in attendance because of the potential they see in it for “affecting scholarship on Mormons and Mormonism in general,” Wayment said.

Brief reports of the presentations by BYU scholars and other specialists working on Institute-sponsored projects follow. Titles of presentations appear in quotation marks, and the order of the reports is chronological.

- *Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Islamic studies and Arabic and director of METI; topic: “Yahyā b. ‘Adī and The Reformation of Morals.”* Yahyā, a 10th-century Arab Christian author, discusses in his book (published in English translation in 2002 in BYU’s Eastern Christian Texts series) specific social virtues and vices and offers sage practical advice on how to cultivate moral perfection. He echoes earlier Hellenistic notions of the philosophical or reasonable way of life, setting forth a nondenominational or ecumenical view of human virtue. Presumably, Yahyā hoped to appeal to both Christians and Muslims in the imperial capital of Baghdad where he taught and worked, and found in Hellenistic thinking possible common ground for ethics in a religiously divided society.

- *Brian M. Hauglid, assistant professor of ancient scripture, co-principal investigator with John Gee on FARMS’s Book of Abraham Research and Publication Project; topic: “The Biblical Muhammad and the Islamic Abraham.”* Muslims in the ninth through eleventh centuries did a two-fold (overlapping) creative process of Islamization of early texts. One creative process composed the biography of Muhammad in such a way that it biblicalized his life story, placing him within the context of biblical prophets. Examples of biblical themes include his birth and childhood, his call and preaching, the persecution he endured, and his eventual triumph in Mecca. Another creative process rewrote the stories of biblical prophets (Abraham was Hauglid’s focus) in order to support the Islamic message (monotheism vs. idolatry). In these ways, Muhammad, the Qur’an, and the rise of Islam reinforce the conception of Islam as the rightful successor to Judaism and Christianity.

- *Steven W. Booras, Institute technical operations manager; Roger T. Macfarlane, associate professor, chair of the Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature; and Kristian Heal, director of CPART; topic: “At the Nexus of Technology and Scholarship: How Technology Is Changing the Way We Can Work.”* The Institute is succeeding in its efforts to bring scholars in closer contact with manuscript resources for the study of the ancient world. One example is the Dead Sea Scrolls database, which allows scholars to search, for example, for technical terms and to verify the standard transcription of the scrolls by checking photographs directly. Another example is the Institute’s recent copublication of a DVD containing complete electronic facsimiles of 33 Syriac manuscripts totaling more than 14,000 pages of text. (Syriac is the Aramaic dialect spoken and written by Christians in the Middle East before the rise of Islam.) This publication is the result of a joint BYU–Vatican Apostolic Library initiative to facilitate greater access to the Library’s considerable manuscript treasures.

- *John Gee, William “Bill” Gay Assistant Research Professor of Egyptology; topic: “Initiation and the Egyptian Temple.”* The daily temple liturgy from Karnak, Egypt, distinguishes between rituals that can be performed by a priest (*wʿb*) and others that must be performed by a prophet (*Ḥm-nṯr*). The distinction demarcates which areas of the temple may be entered by which grade of priest. Records of initiation from the same time and place and whose phraseology interlocks with the temple liturgy and with passages in the Book of the Dead relating to initiation enable scholars to reconstruct something of the temple initiation and its practical importance to everyday life in the temple.

- *John A. Tvedtnes, Institute senior resident scholar; topic: “The Reforms of Tiglath-pileser III and Their Influence on Ancient Israel.”* In 737 BC, the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, seeking to strengthen his growing empire, initiated a series of reforms that have proved to be enduring. These included creating a standing army, placing Assyrian officials in capital cities, establishing a postal and spy network, bringing royal offspring of vas-

sal kings to the Assyrian capital for enculturation, replacing deceased vassal kings with loyal princes, and sending prisoners of war to settle distant lands, thus breaking their ties with their homeland and the local deities. Tiglath-pileser's reforms remained in place with his successors and with the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia that came to rule the region after the Assyrians. Thus we find the Babylonians taking Jewish kings and princes as hostages (e.g., Daniel and his friends) and replacing Jewish kings at will. People from Israel and Judah were deported to other parts of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, leading to the Diaspora. The taking of hostages still occurs in the Middle East, and Tiglath-pileser's standing army, postal system, and spy network remain part of modern civilization.

• *John W. Welch, Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law; topic: "The Bible in American Law."* For centuries, the Bible was considered an integral part of the law, and therefore its foundational influence was systemic and organic. To a degree that may be surprising to some people, many biblical concepts concerning law, ethics, civil liberties, judicial procedures, government, and society continue to provide significant ingredients in the American images of justice, mercy, rights, duties, and the common law. For example, the right against self-incrimination

found in the Fifth Amendment grew out of Roman, Canon, and Jewish law, but William Tyndale can be credited for launching its adoption into English law. His English translation of the Bible (1525) and exposition on "swear not" in Matthew 5–7 (1530) boldly asserted that scripture rejects the idea of compelling a person to bear witness against himself. The case of the adulteress in John 8 was also influential in showing that Jesus did not require her to testify for or against herself. From such developments, the right against self-incrimination found its way into the American Constitution. Biblical provisions do not, and in many cases should not, control American law, but neither can nor should they be eliminated from the realities of American law.

Besides turning a spotlight on religious studies at BYU and providing faculty and Institute scholars with opportunities to develop professional contacts and keep abreast of research in their fields, the regional meeting may yet yield more tangible benefits. "One of the nice things about the regional meetings is that they are small enough to encourage discussions after the presentations," Wayment said. "As a result, several publication opportunities were made available to BYU faculty who presented at the meeting." 

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## 'Binding of Isaac' cont. from p. 1

illustrating the truth of Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham's observation (quoted by David Bokovoy in the first session) that "no other episode in the Old Testament can match the sacrifice of Isaac in its haunting beauty or theological depth."

Topics included art, archaeology, and Jewish and Christian interpretations of the *Akedah*. The contributors were David Bokovoy, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, E. Douglas Clark (his paper was read by his brother), David C. Dollahite, Blair Van Dyke, John Gee, Jared M. Halverson, Amy Hardison, Kristian Heal, Jared Ludlow, Daniel B. McKinlay, Stephen D. Ricks (with Michael Lyon), John S. Thompson, John A. Tvedtnes, and Camille S. Williams.

## James Kugel Lecture

A week after the conference, world-renowned biblical scholar James Kugel gave a lecture at BYU on "The Angels That Wept at the Binding of Isaac: Some Reflections on a Curious Text from the Dead Sea Scrolls." Formerly the Harry Starr Professor of Classical, Modern Jewish, and Hebrew Literature at Harvard University, Kugel is a professor of the Bible at Bar Ilan University in Israel. He discussed how Abraham's offering of Isaac is an example of a story transformed by ancient interpreters beginning in the third century BC. To preclude any mistake in how the missing Hebrew consonants should be read in a certain line in the account, the interpreters added "to everyone" in "I have made known to everyone that you [Abraham] are faithful to me [the Lord] in

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## 'Binding of Isaac' cont. from p. 7

everything that I have told you"). The authors of the later Dead Sea Scrolls text 4Q225 *Pseudo-Jubilees* (written ca. 200 BC) found this interpolation unsatisfactory and emended the text so that *everyone* referred to angels—good ones who wept at the prospect of Isaac's death upon the altar, and bad ones who rejoiced thinking that Abraham would prove false. These interpreters, Kugel argued, did not just solve textual problems, they transformed the Bible. Jewish traditions entered into Christianity via Jerome and Augustine, he said, and any conception of what the Bible is has to take into account the influences of ancient interpreters. The lecture was sponsored by FARMS and the Religious Studies Center. 📖

### FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

***Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1***, by Royal Skousen, is the first part of volume 4 of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project. Covering the title page through 2 Nephi 10, it analyzes every significant variant in the original and printer's manuscripts and in 20 important editions of the Book of Mormon (from the 1830 edition to the 1981 edition). The task of this volume is to use the earliest textual sources and patterns of systematic usage to recover the original English-language text. Available August 2004.

***The FARMS Review*** (vol. 16, no. 1), edited by Daniel C. Peterson, features a look at the mention of secret combinations in legal materials from the early 19th century and a look at trends in Book of Mormon apologetics. Other articles review books on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, violent fundamentalism, baptism for the dead, and Thomas S. Ferguson's search for archaeological evidence supporting the Book of Mormon. Available summer 2004.

***Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*** (vol. 13, no. 1), edited by S. Kent Brown, is a special issue devoted to the Hill Cumorah. Studies include the geologic history and archaeology of the area, early accounts of a cave in the hill, the Hill Cumorah Pageant (its history, music, and costuming), Latter-day Saint poetry, the *Angel Moroni Monument*, a linguistic analysis of the name *Cumorah*, and the earliest photographs of the hill. Available early fall 2004.

***Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant***, edited by John Gee and Brian Hauglid, is the third volume in the Book of Abraham Series. It includes papers from a FARMS-sponsored conference on the Book of Abraham and covers such topics as Abraham's vision of the heavens, commonalities between the Book of Abraham and noncanonical ancient texts, and the significance of the Abrahamic covenant. Available fall 2004.

### Forthcoming METI Publications

***Theodore Abu Qurrah***, translated and introduced by John C. Lamoreaux of Southern Methodist University, includes first-ever English translations of a substantial portion of Theodore Abu Qurrah's writings, which treat such issues as the characteristics of true religion and the nature of free will. Abu Qurrah (fl. AD 810), the bishop of Harran (in modern-day southern Turkey), was one of the first Christians to write in Arabic and to mount a sustained theological defense of Christianity against Islam. Available fall 2004.

# Insights

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FARMS is part of Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. As such, it encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. Under the FARMS imprint, the Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at FARMS include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

FARMS makes interim and final reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer reviewed to ensure that scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these materials are used to support further research and publications. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

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