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FARMS Book of Mormon Research Highlighted

During a recent meeting of the FARMS Development Council, four principal investigators on Book of Mormon-related projects reviewed the status of their ongoing work. The reports clarified each project's goals, highlighted new findings, noted future directions, and expressed appreciation for the crucial support of generous donors, many of whom were in attendance. A summary of the presentations follows.

Book of Mormon Critical Text Project

After opening remarks by FARMS director Noel B. Reynolds, Royal Skousen discussed the Book of Mormon critical text project. Begun in 1988, the project seeks to determine the original English-language text of the Book of Mormon as Joseph

Smith received and dictated it. Skousen, a BYU professor of linguistics and English language, said that textual evidence shows the original text to be more systematic than initially thought and that Joseph received the text word for word and letter by letter. Skousen illustrated what he termed the "astonishing consistency" of the original text with the following example from part 1 of volume 4 of the critical text. The current Book of Mormon text has 17 occurrences of the phrase *sins of the world*, but the only two that refer to John the Baptist's witness of Jesus (1 Nephi 10:10 and 2 Nephi 31:4) originally read in the singular (*sin of the world*), perfectly consistent with the reading of the biblical parallel in John 1:29. (For a full report on the recently published part 1 of volume 4, see the report "Restoring the Original Text of the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 24/4 [2004].)


[continued on page 6](#)

The Michigan Relics Revisited

One of the most enduring archaeological hoaxes, the Michigan relics, a series of copper, slate, and clay forgeries, were "discovered" throughout counties in Michigan from the late 19th century until 1920. James Scotford and Daniel Soper apparently worked together to create and sell the forgeries. Scholars and archaeologists were skeptical from the outset, but interest in the objects persisted. In 1911 James E. Talmage studied the relics, recognizing the impact they could have on the perception of the Book of Mormon if they were genuine. In a detailed report, Talmage dismissed them as blatant forgeries.

However, interest revived in 1984 when a series of authors began writing about the relics, attributing their engravings to Zoroastrian, Christian, and other Old World influences (see *JBMS* 7/1 [1998]: 78). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had acquired almost 800 such objects through a

donation from the University of Notre Dame. Richard Stamps, Latter-day Saint professor of archaeology at Oakland University, examined the collection in 1977 and again in 1998 and 1999. He likewise declared the relics to be forgeries (see his article "Tools Leave Marks: Material Analysis of the Scotford-Soper-Savage Michigan Relics," *BYU Studies* 40/3 [2001]; also see Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Mormonism's Encounter with the Michigan Relics," in that same issue of *BYU Studies*).

While the items clearly are not evidence of an ancient civilization, they are artifacts of Michigan's history. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recently donated the collection to the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing, where pieces were on display through August 2004. The exhibit, "Digging Up Controversy," included commentary depicting the objects as fraudulent but nevertheless reflective of earlier Michigan citizens' fixation with archaeology and ancient civilizations. 

2 Nephi 26 and 27 as Midrash

Nephi was the only Book of Mormon author to receive what might be called a classical Hebrew education. He had ambivalent feelings about his training—indeed, he specifically noted that the tradition would end with himself: “I . . . have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:6; see vv. 1–2). So it is not surprising that he remains the most literate, book-learned of the Nephite prophets. That is to say, his writings exhibit the most connections with earlier prophecies and texts, and he structures his teachings in a way that suggests he is working from written documents. In particular, he is eager to tie his own visions of the future of the House of Israel to the words of Isaiah, and his commentary at 1 Nephi 22—where he weaves phrases from the two Isaiah chapters he has just quoted into a new revelatory discourse—is a masterpiece of prophetic interpretation. The same style of commentary, which by placing familiar phrases into new contexts reinterprets as it explains, is found in a slightly more diffuse form at 2 Nephi 25–30.¹

Nephi’s technique of prophecy through quotation is a striking feature of his writing, yet there are two chapters where his usage of earlier scripture is even more precisely organized. Rather than simply working Isaiah’s words and phrases into his own discourse (impressive as that may be), in 2 Nephi 26 and 27 he quotes nearly all of Isaiah 29, a phrase here and a phrase there, *but in order*, as he provides a new framework that particularizes that earlier prophecy and explains how it was to be fulfilled in latter days when Martin Harris took the page of reformed Egyptian to Charles Anthon in 1828. We sometimes speak of “reading between the lines,” but here Nephi is “writing between the lines.”

If we italicize the words of Isaiah starting in 2 Nephi 26:15–16, it looks like this:

15. After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have *camped against*

them round about, and shall have *laid siege against them with a mount*, and *raised forts against them*; and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten.

16. For those who shall be destroyed *shall speak unto them out of the ground*, and *their speech shall be low out of the dust*, and *their voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit*; for the Lord God will give unto him power, that he may whisper concerning them, even as it were *out of the ground*; and *their speech shall whisper out of the dust*.

Compare this with Isaiah 29:3–4:

3. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.

4. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

One might be tempted to regard this close correspondence as a coincidence, were it not for the fact that Isaiah 29:5–12 keeps coming, piece by piece, through the rest of this chapter and the next, with Isaiah 29:13–24 being quoted directly at the end of 2 Nephi 27.

In order to pull this off, Nephi would have to have known Isaiah literally forward and backward, or perhaps he was working with a copy of Isaiah 29 in front of him, reading and interpolating as he went along (this would be much easier to do with pen and parchment than by reading aloud). Nevertheless, what he is doing is not obvious. His prophecy of Charles Anthon and the sealed book is convincing whether or not one recognizes the underlying literary borrowing. This extraordinary, almost interlinear, commentary is

both playful and profound, in a way reminiscent of the later tradition of Jewish midrash.²

From the time of Ezra through the first centuries AD, Jewish rabbis developed a method of scriptural interpretation that sought to explain sacred writ through creative reinterpretation, clever wordplay, metaphor, and allegory. They wanted to uncover meanings that were not apparent in a surface reading. In so doing they placed emphasis on particular phrases and juxtapositions of events, and they tried to fill in the gaps of scripture imaginatively. These rabbis were not especially concerned with discovering the import of the words in their original ancient contexts (a task claimed by most modern academic scholarship); rather, they were interested in updating the scriptures and reading their own circumstances and lives back into the text. The *Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* defines *midrash* as “the discovery of meanings other than literal in the Bible; derived from the root *darash* (inquire), denotes the literature that interprets scripture in order to extract its full implications and meaning. These interpretations often formed a response to the need of a particular age or environment.”³

The process is not unlike Nephi’s desire to “liken all scriptures unto us” (1 Nephi 19:23–24; see 2 Nephi 11:2, 8). Nephi wanted to let his people know exactly where they fit into Isaiah’s predictions and, by extension, how the prophecies were related to the future history of the book he was writing. As he did so, he was able to bring to light meanings that other readers of Isaiah, in different situations and perhaps with less inspiration, had long missed.

Antiquity of Silver Scrolls Confirmed

A recent *New York Times* article reported new developments in the research on two ancient silver scrolls discovered in Jerusalem’s Hinnom Valley in 1979 and subsequently dated to the late seventh century BC. They were engraved with words that appeared to be text from Numbers 6:24–26. However, because of the aging of the metal, researchers were unable to read several of the inscriptions and thereby confirm the age of the scrolls.

Of course, Nephi’s revisions came with prophetic authority, and thus his commentaries and creative re-readings of Isaiah carry unusual weight.

Nephi’s literary sensibilities set him apart from other Book of Mormon authors. Indeed, his writings are never far from the prophetic tradition he knew and loved, but the remarkable way in which 2 Nephi 26 and 27 enter into a conversation with a sustained passage of scripture deserves special attention. The term *midrash*, somewhat loosely applied, conveys something of the unique methodology and spirit of these chapters. 📖

By Grant Hardy

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Notes

1. It is true that Jacob also quotes two and a half chapters of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 6–8, but his explanatory comments do not reach the same level of literary polish and intertextuality as Nephi’s do; and in any event, Jacob states in 2 Nephi 6:4 that he is quoting Isaiah because his brother asked him to.
2. For an extensive discussion of Nephi’s midrashic interpretation of Isaiah 29, see Robert A. Cloward, “Isaiah 29 and the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998). In the same volume, John W. Welch demonstrates how Abinadi’s discourse in Mosiah 15–16 is grounded in Isaiah 53, following a clear midrashic pattern (“Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon,” 302–5).
3. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Oxford, 1997), s.v. “midrash.”

Thanks to new photographic techniques and computer imaging technology, researchers at the University of Southern California were able to greatly improve the legibility of the inscriptions, making it possible to confirm the antiquity of the scrolls. Those words from Numbers are now positively identified as the oldest known instance of quoted text from the Hebrew Bible. The article noted that “early Hebrew inscriptions were a rarity” and further stated that the scrolls were “a significant contribution to the understanding of the

[continued on page 7](#)

The Book of Abraham: An Ongoing Research Focus

In 1998 FARMS's longtime interest in advancing research supportive of the Book of Abraham as an ancient text found new emphasis and direction as a formalized FARMS project, an impetus made possible by a farsighted donor: the Robert Gay family. Soon a working group of scholars was convened to exchange research and ideas on the text. The resulting exchange of information led to FARMS-sponsored public lectures and a scholarly conference in 1999. The next year saw publication of John Gee's *Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* and, fortuitously, an enlarged edition of Hugh Nibley's *Abraham in Egypt* (a project years in the making). Following in short order were the first two volumes in the Studies in the Book of Abraham series—*Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (2001) and *The Hor Book of Breathings* (2002)—and a “World of Abraham” symposium and scholarly conference in 2002.

“We are interested in illuminating the background of the Book of Abraham and promoting the study of its text,” says Egyptologist John Gee, a research professor with the Institute who is a principal investigator with Brian Hauglid on the Book of Abraham project. Hauglid, a specialist in Middle East studies with BYU's Department of Ancient Scripture, adds that their aim is to “open new avenues of study for the Book of Abraham, an extremely unique, interesting text that has remained reasonably untouched in LDS scholarship.”

Gee and Hauglid point out that while the text of the Book of Abraham is straightforward and relatively unproblematic, many side issues demand that the project take on a larger scope. For example, many Latter-day Saints are not clear on how Joseph Smith acquired the papyri and what became of them. The unusual nature of the book and its facsimiles is another issue, especially for skeptics who claim that it does not resemble ancient Egyptian texts in certain details. Responding to such questions can be distracting, but it can also lead to helpful perspectives or even new findings. The work of contributing scholar Kevin Barney is one example. After examining

the assumptions behind criticisms of the facsimiles, Barney shows how there were ancient Jewish interpretations of Egyptian iconography and discusses the relevance they might have for the Book of Abraham. Barney's work appears in the forthcoming FARMS volume *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*.

To keep the project on a productive track requires a well-coordinated research effort and a constant weighing of competing priorities. Indeed, as Hauglid observes, “It seems that there is no end to the directions that research about the Book of Abraham can take. The book is filled with possibilities.”

While the project has gotten off to a solid start, much work lies ahead and is expected to take years to come to full fruition. The task alone of preparing conference proceedings for publication is hindered by limited staff and resources. *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, a volume containing the proceedings of FARMS's 1999 conference of the same name, is slated for publication early next year (as the third volume in the Studies in the Book of Abraham series). Waiting in the wings are the proceedings of two more FARMS conferences: “The World of Abraham” (2002) and “Latter-day Saint Perspectives on the Binding of Isaac” (2004).


Seeking to illuminate the background of the Book of Abraham entails pursuing numerous lines of research from historical, geographical, cultural, scientific, and doctrinal perspectives. For example, two researchers who spoke at the “Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant” conference took a scientific tack as they considered the question of whether Abraham's writings imply a heliocentric or geocentric view of astronomy; and other scholars from “The World of Abraham” conference proposed theories about the location of Ur of the Chaldees in an effort to pin down the geographical dimension of the text. Such multidisciplinary breadth is an ambitious aspect of this project, one requiring the collaboration of contributing scholars.

Despite inevitable uncertainty on some issues, research to this point affirms that “the Book of Abraham is what it says it is—an ancient text,” notes Hauglid, who adds, “The antiquity of the text became quite clear as nonbiblical themes in the Book of Abraham account such as the idolatry of Terah

and the near death of Abraham were abundant in extrabiblical traditions from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.”

Gee is working to complete a book on the historical backgrounds of the Book of Abraham. It will cover (1) how the papyri were obtained and what became of them, (2) when the text was originally written, and (3) what is known about Abraham’s world. He is also working with many of the problems presented by the Joseph Smith Papyri within the field of Egyptology. Because many scholars either do not take the papyri seriously or misinterpret their content, Gee’s goal is to “do the basic homework first and get the basic Egyptology right.” Part of that effort focuses on *hypocephali*, circular Egyptian funerary illustrations that were often placed under the head of the deceased. Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham is an example of a hypocephalus. Gee published an article in 2001 in a book titled *Le lotus qui sort de terre* (see accompanying sidebar) and presented on hypo-

cephali at two prestigious academic conferences this year (the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists, held 6–12 September in Grenoble, France; and the Aegyptus Pannonia Symposium III, held 17–19 November in Budapest, Hungary).

Current plans for the project include, among other works, two volumes by Hugh Nibley (a revised edition of his *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* and a major new work on the Book of Abraham titled *One Eternal Round*) and a volume by Michael D. Rhodes that includes portions of the Tshemmin Book of the Dead. All books in the Studies in the Book of Abraham series will be distributed by the University of Chicago Press. Gee and Hauglid agree there is also much work to be done with the facsimiles. Whatever specific directions the project may take in the years ahead, the underlying goals remain well defined: generating solid scholarship that increases understanding and appreciation of the Book of Abraham in both the Latter-day Saint and academic communities. 

Research on Hypocephali

One of the common questions that people have about the facsimiles in the Book of Abraham is “How do Joseph Smith’s interpretations match with those of the ancient Egyptians?” As a preliminary step to answering this very question, Michael Lyon has been gathering examples of hypocephali for years and has shared his information with John Gee and others. Gee analyzed the data to try to determine what the Egyptian identification of the figures was. In 2001, he published an article in *Le lotus qui sort de terre*, a collection of Egyptological essays in honor of Edith Varga, one of the leading experts on hypocephali.

The article, “Towards an Interpretation of Hypocephali,” includes a preliminary typology of hypocephali (Facsimile 2 is a type III hypocephalus), a concordance of various numbering systems for hypocephali, a methodology for studying hypocephali, and, as a preliminary step in that direction, a list of ancient Egyptian identifications for various figures found in hypocephali. The list, gathered from multiple hypocephali, shows that most modern Egyptological identifications of figures in hypocephali do not match those of the ancient Egyptians. This means that while the Egyptologists’ interpretations of the facsimiles do not match Joseph Smith’s, they do not match the ancient Egyptians’ either. As Gee writes, “If we ignore the ancient Egyptian identifications of the various figures in the hypocephali, we will construct an understanding of hypocephali that bears no resemblance to the ancient Egyptian understanding. We will, in short, not understand [hypocephali] at all.”

At recent academic conferences, Gee showed that some of the Egyptian phrases associated with hypocephali have been mistranslated. His expanded typology includes three new types of hypocephali, none of which are round.

An answer to the question “How do Joseph Smith’s interpretations match with those of the ancient Egyptians?” is currently premature and may never be conclusive, but we may finally be taking steps in the right direction.

FARMS Research cont. from page 1

Research on Lehi's Trail

S. Kent Brown, a professor of ancient scripture and director of BYU's Ancient Studies program, discussed the history and status of FARMS research in the Arabian Peninsula. Of key interest are Lehi's route through Arabia and the fertile coastal locale known as Bountiful, where the company embarked on a voyage to the New World. In 1988 and 1998, BYU expeditions investigated the southern Omani coast (a surmised location of Bountiful) and concluded that further botanical, geographical, and archaeological studies were warranted. Brown noted that two documentary films are growing out of this project, both by award-winning LDS filmmaker Peter Johnson: one on Lehi's route to the New World, the other on the famed incense trail.

Ancient Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon

John E. Clark, professor of anthropology and director of the BYU New World Archaeological Foundation, reported on FARMS's Mesoamerican initiative. He proposed a 50-year research project on Mesoamerican history and chronology. The project's goal is to recover the history of Mesoamerica's early cities. This will be an enormous task best accomplished by organizing a community of scholars. Clark's current work in Chiapas aims to identify the earliest pre-urban people there (material remains suggest a date of 1200 BC so far). He concluded by listing many aspects of Mesoamerican civilization that comport with the Book of Mormon: ancient writing, fortifications, cotton armor, long dynasties, stone thrones, artistic motif of a tree growing from one's heart, 400-year prophecies, and cycles of civilization.

Responding to Critics of Restoration Scripture

Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at BYU, reviewed FARMS's efforts to respond appropriately to critics who challenge the authenticity of Latter-day Saint scripture. This work should not be a fundamental purpose of FARMS, Peterson said, but a by-product of mainstream academic work, which enables those who respond to critics to speak from a position of strength. He pointed to Egyptologist John Gee's work on the Book

of Abraham as an example of how solid research accepted by the larger academic community is simultaneously strengthening Mormon apologetics. Other research, such as that of Keith E. Norman and Jordan Vадja on early Christian belief in deification, show that Latter-day Saint teachings, to the chagrin of critics, fit comfortably with the theology of the earliest Christians. Peterson shared several other examples of how faithful research on many fronts is defusing the claims of critics.

There's More to Do

The final presentation of the symposium was given by John W. Welch, founder of FARMS. He first noted several major research projects that have been made possible only by the generosity of specific donors, including work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Masada exhibition brought to BYU in 1996, and the recent publication of *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*. He went on to describe several new discoveries, such as a recent examination of the Gubbio brass plates in Italy and three possible translations of the Isaianic expression "swallowed up in victory" that all happen to be present in the Book of Mormon; publication of new developments awaits the funding necessary to complete the research and writing. The importance of Book of Mormon research was emphasized by quoting Mormon 7:9, where Mormon states the purpose of his book, namely, "for the intent that ye may believe [the Bible]." For this reason, FARMS is eager to support the production of a multivolume New Testament commentary. Welch explained how the work of FARMS—to bring faithful scholarship to bear on all our ancient scriptures, both the Bible and the scriptures restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith—will continue to go forward in the future, as it has in the past, through the support of many people working cooperatively and generously with one another. 📖

Correction

In the previous issue of *Insights* (vol. 24, no. 4), the article "Restoring the Original Text of the Book of Mormon" should have read "towards that great and spacious building" rather than "toward the tree of life" in two references to 1 Nephi 8:31.

Silver Scrolls cont. from page 3

history of religion in ancient Israel, particularly the time of the Judean Monarchy 2,600 years ago.”

The scrolls were worn as amulets whose words were “intended to provide a blessing that will be used to protect the wearer from some manner of evil forces,” said the researchers. Of additional interest is the fact (not noted in the *Times* article) that this confirmed early date refutes the theories

of many biblical scholars that the Pentateuch was composed much later.

These findings were documented in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* and will be discussed in greater detail in *Near Eastern Archaeology*. The *New York Times* article, “Solving a Riddle Written in Silver,” can be found by searching the archives at <http://nytimes.com> [registration required]. 📖

The Mother’s Role in Teaching Religious Values—Jerusalem, 600 BC

In ancient Israel, the household was the center of a woman’s life and the place in which she held the most power. Even though a child was born into “the house of the father” (*bet ’ab*, the ancestral household), the mother was the first and most abiding influence upon the child’s life from the day of birth, instilling in the child the most basic sociocultural values, modes of behavior, and religious beliefs. In Proverbs, the mother is seen as both a nurturer and educator whose teachings are complementary to those of the father (1:8; 6:20).

Children learned the proper observance of important features of ancient Israelite religion by watching their mother’s daily ritual of washing herself, offering sacrifice with her husband, and praying. A good deal of this religious teaching would also have taken place on the Sabbath, when both women and men laid aside their daily chores to worship. The Sabbath was a day of rejoicing and rest, particularly for the labor-weary woman. Both she and her husband spent the day reading from the Torah, singing hymns of praise, and teaching their children the beliefs and rituals of their religion (see Deuteronomy 6:7; this requirement that children be taught the Mosaic law presumably applied to both parents, for the law was read to the entire population).

Children living in Jerusalem around 600 BC would probably have observed their mothers

attending local assemblies or gatherings to worship alongside their fathers. Women participated in religious festivals and national celebrations (Deuteronomy 16:9–15; 31:12), singing and dancing, and brought sacrifices of thanksgiving to the temple, teaching their children through their example.

Nephi makes it clear from the first verse of his account that he was grateful to both of his parents for his upbringing. “I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father” (1 Nephi 1:1). Apparently his education was given to him by these “goodly parents,” righteous and devoted people who had taken the time to teach him reading, writing, the language of the scriptures, and the learning of his father. But the implication of Nephi’s statement is even deeper than that. He also refers to an inherited spiritual knowledge and a familiarity with religion and the God whom his parents worshipped.

In his account of obtaining the brass plates, Nephi recalls the powerful words of Sariah, who had been extremely troubled and anxious for her sons’ safety during their absence: “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them” (1 Nephi 5:8).

Against all odds, Sariah’s sons had succeeded, and her testimony became a sure knowledge that

continued on page 8

Mother's Role cont. from p. 7

God's hand was directing the family's course. Sariah and Lehi then offered sacrifice and burnt offerings in thanks for the safety of their sons. Sariah's fervent statement of belief obviously made an impression on Nephi, who painstakingly inscribed the account in considerable detail. This manifestation of Sariah's faith was probably one of many others that served as religious teaching devices to her children and influenced their own belief systems. (*Adapted from Ariel E. Bybee, "A Woman's World in Lehi's Jerusalem," in Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely [Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004], 139–44.*)

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Journal of Book of Mormon Studies (vol. 13, nos. 1–2), edited by S. Kent Brown, is a special double 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 Hill Cumorah Monument, a linguistic analysis of the name *Cumorah*, and the earliest photographs of the hill. Available December 2004.

Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity, by Hugh W. Nibley, edited by John F. Hall and John W. Welch, represents an edited, expanded version of Hugh Nibley's lecture notes from a class he taught in 1954. This volume explores the offices of apostle and bishop, the priesthood authority associated with them, and questions of succession in the early church and in Rome. Copublished with Deseret Book, it will appear as volume 15 in the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley. Available early 2005.

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 early 2005.

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 Abū Qurrah's writings, which treat such issues as the characteristics of true religion and the nature of free will. Abū Qurrah (fl. AD 810), the bishop of Haran (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 early 2005.

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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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