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The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
& Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1991, No. 4

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

July

## Nibley Exposes the Pretensions of the Ancient State—and of Our Own

"Reading Nibley is a constant pleasure, even where the argument is subtle or a page is studded with details. To benefit most fully from reading Nibley, one must be like a cup, ready to be filled to the brim, and then some," writes Stephen D. Ricks, Associate Professor of Asian and Near Eastern Languages, in the forward to *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*.

This long anticipated work is volume ten in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*. It includes ten essays:

- The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State
- Tenting, Toll, and Taxing
- The Hierocentric State
- Sparsiones
- The Unsolved Loyalty Problem: Our Western Heritage
- Victorious Loquacity: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else
- How to Have a Quiet Campus, Antique Style
- New Light on Scaliger
- Three Shrines: Mantic, Sophic, and Sophistic
- Paths That Stray: Some Notes on Sophic and Mantic

These last two chapters document three lectures Nibley delivered at Yale University. They are published here for the first time.

Concerning "The Arrow, the Hunter, and the State" and "The Hierocentric State," Martin B. Hickman, Professor of Political Science and former director of the BYU Jerusalem Center, once said that publishing those two items alone would count as a career for most scholars. "If I had those two items in my bibliography, I would not care what else I had." Gary P. Gillum, Religion and Ancient Studies Librarian at BYU and a long-time student of Nibley's writings, views "Three Shrines: Mantic, Sophic, and Sophistic" "as one of the most insightful pieces that Nibley has ever written."

The topics of these essays range widely: the role of various objects—the arrow and the tent, for example—in archaic state formation; the political ideology and religious and educational values of ancient states. The theme—at root deeply religious in nature—that pervades most of these essays is the power and pretensions of the ancient state.

A thematic strand that runs through "Tenting, Toll, and Taxing" demonstrates the weakness, frailty, and impressionableness of the state. Nibley's intent is to "show how the state spent the most impressionable years of its childhood living as an

*continued on page 3*

## F.A.R.M.S. Plans Open House at Education Week

If you are going to attend this year's Education Week on the BYU campus, plan to visit the F.A.R.M.S. open house on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 5:00 to 7:30 P.M. on the ground floor of Amanda Knight Hall, just south of campus on the corner of 800 North and University Avenue.

On Tuesday, August 20, Hugh Nibley will be at the open house to visit with attendees and sign books. The open house on Wednesday, August 21, will feature other researchers and authors. Members of the F.A.R.M.S. board of directors will attend both evenings.

There will also be displays of F.A.R.M.S. books and papers in the BYU Bookstore during the entire week.

The F.A.R.M.S. office on the third floor of Amanda Knight Hall will be open during Education Week from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M., and members of the office staff will be available during both open houses. If we can be of service to you while you are in Provo during Education Week, please let us know. We look forward each year to seeing many of you during this time.

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is a nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to the study of ancient scripture. Your tax-deductible contributions enable F.A.R.M.S. to sponsor and coordinate a wide range of research projects that enhance our understanding of these sacred writings.

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# F.A.R.M.S. UPDATE

The Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies

Number 77

July 1991

## Symbolic Action as Prophetic Curse

At one point in his ministry, Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to remove his garment and shoes and walk "naked [like a slave, without an upper garment] and barefoot" among the people. Isaiah's action was to be a sign, for as Isaiah walked like a slave, even so would the Egyptians become slaves to the Assyrians (Isaiah 20:2-4). This prophetic symbolic action by Isaiah represented a prophetic curse that destruction and ruin would come upon the Egyptians.

Ezekiel conducted a symbolic act which had anathematical tones. He cut off the hair of his beard and his head, and divided it into three portions. One third Ezekiel burned, one third he scattered into the wind, and one third he smote with a knife. This was a prophetic curse, demonstrating the three ways in which Israel would perish—by fire, by scattering, and by the sword of war (Ezekiel 5:1-17).

Such prophetic symbolic curses are well attested in the Bible. G. Fohrer, *Die symbolischen Handlungen der Propheten* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1953: 17-19), and David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983: 100-101), take a broad approach to prophetic symbolic actions, listing several examples (see for instance, Num. 21:6-9; 1 Kings 22:11; 2 Kings 13:14-19; Isaiah 2:9-10, 3:1-4; 8:1-4; 7:10-17; Jer. 19:1-15; 27-28; 28:10-11; 32:6-44; Ezek. 4:1-3; 4:4-8; 4:9-17).

Several F.A.R.M.S. publications have noted various types of symbolic actions that are present in the Book of Mormon. M. Morrise, "Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testa-

ment, and Book of Mormon" (F.A.R.M.S., 1982), and T. Szink, "An Oath of Allegiance in the Book of Mormon" (in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*. S. Ricks and W. Hamblin, eds. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990: 36-38), present examples of simile curses. J. Welch discusses parabolic acts performed by prophetic oracles ("Law and War in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, p. 62; "Was Helaman 7-8 an Allegorical Sermon?" F.A.R.M.S. Update, May 1986).

Book of Mormon prophets carried on the Old World tradition of performing symbolic actions which revealed a prophetic curse. The incident of the title of liberty was much more than a rally behind a standard. Moroni rent his coat, wrote upon it the title of liberty, placed it upon a pole, and "went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see" (Alma 46:19). After this dramatic act, Moroni likened his rent coat to the garment of Joseph which had been rent by Joseph's brothers and proclaimed, "let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain" (Alma 46:23). A curse is clearly implied. Those who fail to keep the commandments of God would be imprisoned, sold, or slain.

Those who witnessed Moroni's symbolic activity responded in turn with another symbolic action by casting their garments at Moroni's feet and then promising not to fall into transgression, lest God "cast us at the

feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot" (Alma 46:22).

A prophetic symbolic action accompanied by a curse is found in the hanging of Zemnarihah on the top of a tree. After his death the Nephites felled the tree and called, "May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them . . . even as this man hath been felled to the earth" (3 Nephi 4:28-29). This act predicted the way the wicked would be slain if they continued their attempts to murder the righteous.

A final example of symbolic action as a prophetic curse is found in the episode of the scalping of Zerahemnah. After Moroni's soldier scalped Zerahemnah, the warmongering chief of the Lamanites, he displayed the scalp on the point of his sword and stated with a loud voice, "even as this scalp has fallen to the earth . . . so shall ye fall to the earth except ye will deliver up your weapons of war and depart with a covenant of peace" (Alma 44:12-14).

The symbolic actions in these examples were so effective that in each instance the audience reacted immediately and positively. Those who viewed Moroni gathered around the title of liberty; those who witnessed the felling of the tree had a great emotional and spiritual experience (3 Nephi 4:30-33); and the followers of Zerahemnah who were present when he was scalped "were struck with fear" and "threw down their weapons of war" and promised to live in peace (Alma 44:15).

Based on research by Donald W. Parry

## KBYU Will Broadcast 52 Book of Mormon Classes by Hugh Nibley

During the 1988–89 and 1989–90 school years, the Brigham Young University Division of Continuing Education and KBYU TV joined to film Hugh Nibley teaching BYU Religion classes 421 and 422, "Teachings of the Book of Mormon." The visual and sound quality are excellent.

A recent gift from Geneva Steel has made possible the final preparation of the classes for TV broadcast and home VHS distribution during 1992, the Church curriculum year when the Book of Mormon will again be the main course of study.

Starting in January 1992, KBYU will broadcast a session of the class each Sunday at 5:30 P.M.

Anyone who wants to make a serious study of the Book of Mormon will want to watch this weekly series

and have a permanent copy of it. This is a chance to see Hugh Nibley in action, presenting a college class on the book that he loves and knows so well. It is vintage Nibley, with his insights, humor, and passionate convictions.

Nibley gives particular attention to the cultures from which the Book of Mormon peoples came, providing insights into their thoughts and lives. In turn those insights help us understand better what those people experienced and what those experiences can teach us.

Transcripts and VHS videotapes of the lectures will also be available from F.A.R.M.S. when the series starts in January. Plan to make Nibley's Book of Mormon class a Sunday afternoon tradition in 1992.

## Mesoamerican Tours Shaping Up

Don't miss the F.A.R.M.S. tours to southern Mexico and Guatemala, identified by many as the heartland of the Book of Mormon. John W. Welch will lead a tour leaving on November 5 and Noel Reynolds will lead a second tour to the same areas leaving on February 4 of next year.

These promise to be exciting and educational tours that will add to your understanding of the Book of Mormon. You will also enjoy traveling with and getting to know other friends of the Foundation.

If you wish to join one of these tours, we need to receive your deposit soon (\$200 per person—see the order form on page 4). For more information, see the previous issue of *Insights* or call or write the F.A.R.M.S. office.

*Continued from front page*

## Nibley on *The Ancient State*

orphan of the storm in tents of vagabonds where it acquired many of the habits and attitudes that still condition its activities" (p. 33).

In "The Hierocentric State," Nibley shows that humanity has been vainly preoccupied with seeking the glories and honors offered by the hierocentric state (a heavenly kingdom thought to be at the center of the universe, ruled by a divinely appointed king with the sacred duty to rule the whole earth), with its "high and independent life of a chivalrous aristocracy," its powerful institutions, and its holy shrines. Nonetheless, despite all the grandeur and strength promised by the hierocentric state, it has a great weakness: it does not and cannot exist.

These essays are often highly pertinent to our own time. Astute

readers will recognize in these essays many now-familiar themes of Nibley's trenchant social commentaries. The foibles of our age are nothing new, repeating what has been done in other eras. For example, "The Unsolved Loyalty Problem," which deals with loyalty and loyalty oaths in antiquity, was originally written at the time of the McCarthy hearings in the early 1950s but raises soul-wrenching questions just as relevant today as they ever were. "How to Have a Quiet Campus, Antique Style" was composed on the occasion of the visit of a former U.S. vice-president to the campus of Brigham Young University, whom Nibley calls "an authentic Rhetor—Greek, political, ostentatious, and not overly scrupulous." This essay, as well as "Victoriosa Loquacitas," "Three Shrines," and "Paths That

Stray," speaks to our own educational and spiritual malaise as much as to that of the ancient world.

Similar to past scholarly papers by Nibley, the ten essays of this volume bring us back to the profound, implicit message: wealth, learning, technology, and assertions of divinely bestowed authority give a false sense of security; they are no substitute for the gospel. Statecraft, as it has generally been practiced, is merely priestcraft in another guise.

The clothbound work, edited by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, contains illustrations, manifold footnotes, as well as scriptural and subject indices. It will be of great interest to all students of antiquity and of the foundations of society, politics, education, or religions. It is available on the order form on page 4.

## ORDER FORM

Catalog Number	New Titles	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price
N-10	Nibley, Hugh W., <i>The Ancient State</i> , vol. 10 in <i>The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley</i> , 515 pp., hardbound, Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S.		\$21.95 \$18.65 (-15%) \$17.50 (-20%)	
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REV-90	Peterson, Daniel C., ed., <i>Review of Books on the Book of Mormon</i> , vol. 3 (1991), 338 pp., includes 1991 F.A.R.M.S. Annual Lecture on the Book of Mormon		\$8.50	
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## Collected Works Computerized

Infobases, Inc., has put the first 10 volumes of the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* on computer disk. They come with Folio software that makes it quick and easy to search for particular words and phrases. Copies of this and other Infobases products are now available through F.A.R.M.S. at a 10% discount. See the order form on page 4.

These items are available for IBM-compatible computers on 3.5", 5.25", and 5.25"HD disks.

Also available on the order form is the Infobase Basic Set 1, which includes *Jesus the Christ, The Articles of Faith, The Lectures on Faith, Gospel Doctrine, The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph, Discourses of Brigham Young*, and the standard works. Other items are also available from F.A.R.M.S. at the 10% discount. Write or call our office for the complete product list.

## Photos Sought

We would like to increase our file of illustrations for use in our newsletter, catalog, and other publications. If you have high-quality photographs of Book of Mormon materials, Mesoamerican lands and artifacts, the Near East, or Church history, please consider sending us copies so that we can make our publications as informative as possible.

## Resubscribe and Save

Now you can subscribe for three years and save \$6. For \$30 you will receive the F.A.R.M.S. newsletter for three years. This avoids the need to resubscribe every year, which saves the Foundation on administrative costs and spares you any subscription increases that become necessary in the next three years. F.A.R.M.S. deeply appreciates its committed subscribers for their long-term support.

## Annual Banquet Scheduled for September 27

Elder Neal A. Maxwell has graciously agreed to speak briefly on September 27 at the annual F.A.R.M.S. recognition banquet. The positive comments received after our two banquets during the last year—one honoring Hugh Nibley's eightieth birthday and a dinner at which Truman Madsen spoke—convinced us that many friends of the Foundation enjoy the chance to share an evening together.

This year's banquet will pay tribute to many devoted individuals who have made this year one of the best yet for F.A.R.M.S. At the dinner, you can also catch up on the Foundation's activities and talk to

others involved in spreading knowledge about the Book of Mormon. This year we will also have the opportunity to hear from several great speakers and receive fresh insights on the work in which we are engaged. In addition to Elder Maxwell's remarks, F.A.R.M.S. board members will report on the projects of the last year and plans for the coming year.

We will meet in room 375 of the Wilkinson Center at BYU at 7:30 P.M. on the 27th.

The cost of the dinner will be \$25 per person. Please check the box on the order form or call or write the F.A.R.M.S. office for reservations.

## Friend-raiser

People you know might like to receive this Newsletter. You are our best means of reaching people with information about the services that the Foundation can provide. It is a big help to all if you can send the names of your friends who you think might be interested in the work of the Foundation. We will send them an introductory packet explaining F.A.R.M.S. and extending an invitation to subscribe.

We keep our mailing list strictly in-house, so the names you refer will not be used for any other purpose.

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## New Testament Word Studies

To enrich your study of the New Testament, F.A.R.M.S. offers a ground-breaking collection of twelve LDS word studies from the Greek New Testament. The eighth Article of Faith states, "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly." Many nuances and connotations of Greek words in the writings of John, Paul, Peter, and others are of great interest to Latter-day Saints.

This collection of exploratory studies, available on the order form in this issue of *Insights*, has been drawn primarily from items published by John W. Welch in the BYU Religious Studies Center Newsletter. Twelve words having special significance in Mormon usage are analyzed. The words include

*evangelist, peculiar people, testament, mansions, endow, seal, firstborn, and unchangeable.*

For example, one of the earliest known uses of the word *evangelist* outside the Bible comes from a Greek inscription describing a high priest who delivered oracular sayings to individuals who came seeking prophetic oracles about their personal lives. It is noteworthy that Joseph Smith similarly identified an evangelist as one who gives spiritual and prophetic blessings to individuals.

Several of the words studied in this collection are of special interest because they point to the existence of sacred ordinances and ceremonies in the early Christian Church. These studies are pioneering efforts. Comments and additions are welcomed.

## Antenantiosis in the Book of Mormon

Gail Call, one of our enthusiastic F.A.R.M.S. readers, has pointed out the presence in the Book of Mormon of an interesting figure of speech called *antenantiosis*. In this figure of speech, an expression is stated in terms of its negated opposite. The result is to express the positive in a very high degree, or as the biblical scholar E.W. Bullinger puts it, "We thus emphasize that which we seem to lessen" (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* [Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, 1989], pp. 159–64).

For instance, when Jacob counsels to "despise not the revelations of God" (Jacob 4:8), he is not merely saying not to despise the revelations; he is actually urging the righteous to hold the revelations of God in the highest esteem. The unexpected negative increases the force of the idea that it apparently understates. It seems to make us notice and dwell on the expression, so that we can learn more from it.

Thus in the promise, "if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out" (Mormon 9:29), Moroni is actually promising that the faithful who endure will be blessed beyond measure. When Mosiah says "it is not expedient that such abominations should come upon you," he is not merely saying that it is not a good idea to commit or allow such abominations, he is forcefully admonishing the people to prevent them. When Amulek warns that "he [the devil] rewardeth you no good thing," he does not mean just the lack of a good reward, but the surety of tremendously evil results—torment, captivity, and damnation.

Call points out other Book of Mormon uses of antenantiosis in Mosiah 2:9; 19:17; Alma 12:14; 30:21; 34:39; 46:30; 50:27; and 3 Nephi 5:1; 6:18; 7:18. It is an interesting figure of speech that helps illuminate the forceful effectiveness of the prophetic messages of the Book of Mormon.

## Correction or Clarification

In the May 1991 issue of *Insights*, reference was made to Joseph Smith's *New York Reputation Re-examined* as "expressly anti-Mormon." Whereas affidavits reprinted and analyzed in this book may be considered "anti-Mormon," F.A.R.M.S. expresses no position about the book.

Also, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, volume 3, statements are made that could be construed as calling unspecified contributors to *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* and Signature Books, Inc., "dishonest" and "hard-core anti-Latter-day Saints." These statements were the reviewer's interpretation of portions of the book, and no personal connotation was intended.

The opinions expressed in the reviews are those of the reviewers alone and do not necessarily represent the position of F.A.R.M.S.

## Violent End to Maya Civilization?

A May 26 article in the *Washington Post* reports on the archaeological research of Vanderbilt U. Prof. Arthur Demarest that shows that the Maya civilization may have collapsed much more violently and much more rapidly than previously thought. "The whole region was gripped by endemic warfare far more destructive than anything we had ever imagined," says Demarest. He believes that this collapse was related to overpopulation and poor soils.

While Demarest's conclusions are still controversial, they make it clear that the Book of Mormon's account of the large population of the land (Mormon 1:7) and the precipitous and bloody end of Nephite civilization not many years earlier are quite plausible in that region.

We thank Lew Cramer for alerting us to this article.