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The Foundation for
Ancient Research
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INSIGHTS

AN ANCIENT WINDOW

1992, No. 3

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

May

F.A.R.M.S. Conference on "The Olive and Jacob 5" a Success

More than 300 people attended the F.A.R.M.S. conference on "The Olive and Jacob 5," held on Saturday, March 21. The nineteen presenters approached Jacob 5 from a variety of perspectives—cultural, economic, literary, historical, and theological. Comments from the audience indicated that they found this fifth annual F.A.R.M.S. Book of Mormon Lecture extremely helpful in understanding the background and meaning of the allegory of the olive tree.

The presenters are making final refinements to their papers, in some cases based on the discussions generated at the conference, and the papers will be collected and published in a volume before the end of this year. In the meantime, a few of the papers presented are available in preliminary form on the order form in this issue. The following summary was presented by Stephen Ricks at the conclusion of the conference:

Daniel Peterson and John Gee cast their net wide in their paper on "Olive Culture in the Pre-Modern World," providing an appreciation of the vital cultural and economic importance of the olive in the ancient Mediterranean, not only in the eastern region but also in Greece, Italy, Spain, and North Africa. They noted a persistent link in the ancient world between civilization and olive culture.

Bill Hess and Daniel Fairbanks, in "Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture," provided an understanding of the botanical background of Jacob 5, pointing out the high degree of agricultural sophistication that is reflected in the chapter, as well as some striking—and significant—anomalies. They discussed numerous horticultural techniques, as well as terms and phrases in Jacob 5—for example, "young and tender branches," "the main top," and "dig about"—and they clarified the horticultural differences between wild and tame olive trees.

Royal Skousen has done groundbreaking work in his study of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, and of the Book of Mormon's textual tradition generally. His presentation at the conference made clear how his work is relevant to several phrases in Jacob 5, as well as the wide importance it has for other parts of the Book of Mormon.

John Tvedtnes, in his presentation "Vineyard or Olive Orchard?" showed that olive trees were planted amid grapevines in the ancient Near East, and that the Hebrew word rendered "vineyard" has a much larger range of meaning than simply a place where grapes are grown. This paper helped to remind us that the Book of Mormon was originally written in an Afro-

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Chiasmus Study Cited

The 1992 reprint of a classic work on chiasmus, Nils W. Lund's *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, contains a new preface that refers frequently to *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, a work published in 1981 by John W. Welch.

Lund's book has long been out of print, and this reprinting once again makes available the work of this scholar who, Welch believes, "has probably done more than any other to bring the study of chiasmus to life in the twentieth century." The Lund reprint is available on the order form.

The authors of the new preface, David M. Scholer and Klyne R. Snodgrass, both of the North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, discuss the revival of interest in chiasmus stimulated by Lund's book, placing Welch's "somewhat remarkable volume of essays" among "the more important broad studies of chiasmus in the last twenty years."

Former F.A.R.M.S. Worker Honored

On March 7, DeeAnn Hofer was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Utah. Because of her fine contributions to the foundation, F.A.R.M.S. was pleased to be one of her sponsors in this competition.

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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 82

May 1992

Challenging Conventional Views of Metal Use in Mesoamerica

ORTHODOX ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE for many years supposed that metals were not used in Mesoamerica, the probable area where Book of Mormon events took place, until nearly 500 years after the scripture says the Nephites were destroyed. Of course the Book of Mormon briefly mentions the use of metal among the Nephites (although by the time of its last mention, in Mosiah 11:8, it was "precious"). Previous attempts to refute the prevailing view have had little effect. Renewed research by John Sorenson has revealed a substantial body of data on the subject that was previously ignored.

An intensive survey of the literature reporting archaeological and metallurgical investigations in the area, made possible by a donation from Mark Cannon, now shows that between 50 and 100 specimens from about 40 sites predate the A.D. 900 "metal curtain" claimed by the archaeologists. In some cases the actual status of a piece proves hard to pin down from published statements, but at least two-thirds of the total were found by experienced archaeologists whose reports seem reliable. These known fragments date back to at least 100 B.C.

Typically when one of these "anomalous" specimens has been reported, the accompanying statement goes something like this: "Since we know that metals date only after A.D. 900, in all probability this specimen was intruded into our archaeological feature by latecomers to the site, or else the site itself is later than it otherwise seems." In one famous case, metal

fragments were found in a cache constructed beneath a stela at Copan, Honduras, dated A.D. 782 by its inscription. A respected analyst suggested that the objects "were gathered together and inserted into the vault (much later), perhaps by a band of pilgrims visiting the deserted ceremonial center." In fact this scenario directly contradicts the judgment of the excavator. The suggestion that ragtag visitors would dig beneath a massive stela at an abandoned site to find the cache put there by those who erected the monument and then put pieces of scarce copper in among earlier artifacts instead of looting the deposit is unsupported by a single known case of similar behavior. Yet logic little more compelling than this is not infrequent in the reports.

There is another line of evidence that supports the idea that metal was in use earlier than usually thought. Works of art—human figures carved on stone or in ceramic—show what are quite surely metal objects. The dates range as early as 300 B.C.

Even more compelling is linguistic evidence. Based on words that are similar in different Mesoamerican languages current in recent centuries, linguists have reconstructed "proto-languages" that consist of words that apparently were in use centuries ago. Differences between similar terms in present-day languages are understandable to linguistic scientists if there was a word in the proto-language from which the present terms descended, but such variations are puzzling if there was not. Linguists can also make reasonable estimates of the time it took for these varia-

tions to develop (as discussed in Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* [Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1985], pages 71-73).

In three major language families of Mexico and Guatemala, terms for metal have been reconstructed, and in each case the date given to account for the divergences in the daughter tongues exceeds 1000 B.C. This means that speakers of the parent languages way back then had a word for "metal." That they would all have had a word without having any metal seen is highly unlikely. If archaeologists have good luck, they will someday find pieces of metal that date as early as the names do.

This research makes clear that there is more information about Mesoamerican metal than had been previously brought together, and that the information suggests that metal was used before the experts said it was. At least two methodological lessons are taught by the study of "old" source materials such as those examined in this project: (1) "Everyone knows" can be a convenient excuse for going along with prevailing views that seem to challenge scripture, even though deeper digging may challenge that challenge; (2) we may be too prone to accept unthinkingly "expert" answers to serious issues, even, perhaps, in our reading of the scriptural text.

The results of this work will be available later through F.A.R.M.S. as an article covering all aspects of metals in the Book of Mormon, complete with an annotated bibliography.

Based on research by John L. Sorenson

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Participants Gain Insights at Olive Conference

Asiatic/Hamito-Semitic language family, and not in English.

David Seely's paper, "The Use of Allegory in the Old Testament and Ancient Near East," demonstrated that Jacob 5 has literary characteristics redolent of the Israelite *mashal* and contains elements of simile, metaphor, parable, and allegory in a very sophisticated intermixture that also reflects a very subtle knowledge of horticultural matters.

Donald Parry's presentation on "Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil" pointed out the astonishing array of religious uses—with both persons and objects—to which olive oil was put in ancient Israel. Brother Parry's presentation left no doubt about olive oil's ubiquitousness in ancient Israel's worship.

Truman Madsen's paper, "The Olive Press—A Symbol of Christ," sensitively summarized and read by Louis Midgley, discussed how the grinding of the olive, its crushing under enormous pressure in order to obtain a usable product, is a metaphor both for Christ's atoning sacrifice, a vital part of which, significantly, takes place in Gethsemane ("the place of the olive press"), as well as for our own purifying trials.

John Hall, in his presentation on "The Olive in Greco-Roman Religion," demonstrated that religious significance was attributed to the olive by the Greeks, in particular, and by the Romans to a much more limited extent. He noted that the religious significance of the olive among the Greeks and Romans is most likely Minoan in origin. But he also showed that, just as the olive was a symbol of Israel in Jacob 5, it is also an identifying symbol of the Athenians as well.

Jack Welch's paper on the "Allegory of Zenez (or Kenas) in the Pseudo-Philo" introduced us to a Zenez or Kenas in the pseudepigraphic book, the *Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo*. While Brother Welch does not believe

that this Zenez or Kenas is to be identified with the Book of Mormon, he notes that both present a full, balanced portrayal of plant symbolism in portraying God's relation to Israel.

David Seely and Jack Welch together presented "The Olive in the Old Testament." Seely pointed out that the olive is not to be ignored in the life of the ancient Israelites, and that it is regularly mentioned in the Old Testament. Welch argued that the date for Zenos should probably be placed around the time of David's monarchy. The relative simplicity of the language he believes to be a further indication of the prophet's early date.

James Faulconer provided careful analysis of Romans 11. He finds that the similarities between Romans 11 and Jacob 5 are too strong and numerous to be explained on the basis of a common rhetorical tradition to which both texts belong. Some of the material in Romans 11 may be directly taken from the Zenos text on which Jacob 5 is based. At the least, Faulconer believes, both Romans 11 and the Zenos text draw from a common third source.

John Tvedtnes, in his "Borrowings from the Parable of Zenos," argued that there may have been borrowing from and adaptation of Zenos in several subsequent writings in the Judeo-Christian tradition, including Romans 11.

Stephen Ricks discussed "Olive Culture in the Second Temple Era and Early Rabbinic Period," showing how the crucial role of the olive in ancient Israel continued into later periods.

Arthur Henry King allowed us to sit at the feet of a master in his paper on the "Language Themes in Jacob 5" and reminded us once again of the richness of the material that we approach in the Book of Mormon.

Noel Reynolds, in his presentation "Nephite Interpretations of Zenos," noted that several Book of Mormon prophets seem to be relying on the al-

legory at various points in their elaborations of their own visions and that their interpretations have influenced later prophets at several points, in both language and religious concepts.

Catherine Thomas approached the deeply spiritual meaning of Jacob 5 in her presentation on "Jacob's Allegory: The Mystery of Christ." She focused on what the allegory reveals about grace, the atonement, and the reclaiming of Israel. Whatever the attractions of the historical, cultural, and economic aspects of the olive, it is its spiritual significance that gives the allegory of Zenos its particular potency.

Grant Underwood, in "Jacob 5 in the Nineteenth Century," discussed the interpretations made of this chapter. His work is a paradigm of writing a history of interpretation of the Book of Mormon, which has been studied and commented on for over 160 years. He also reminded us that these nineteenth-century writers and commentators still have much to say to us and are often a great deal of fun to read.

Paul Hoskisson reminded us that Jacob 5, like the whole of the Book of Mormon, is a tract for our time, just as relevant today as when it was first published.

It is fair to say that Jacob 5 has never before been approached from so many different perspectives in a single day's symposium. Perhaps no chapter of the Book of Mormon has. And yet this is precisely what the Book of Mormon warrants if we are to appreciate more fully its extraordinary richness. It is a book deserving of our respect and our devoted study. It was the Foundation's hope and intention that the symposium would give those who attended and those who will read the papers food for reflection on the Book of Mormon and a renewed commitment to study it.

Books Focus on Ancient Mesoamerican Civilizations

New editions of two books, available at a discount from F.A.R.M.S., provide a scholarly yet readable introduction to civilization in the area where most of the events of the Book of Mormon probably took place. Both books were written by Michael D. Coe, Professor of Anthropology at Yale University. Although not written from an LDS perspective, these books provide the serious student of the Book of Mormon some very valuable background information. Both books also contain a large number of excellent photographs, maps, and line drawings, which make them not only informative to read but a pleasure to browse.

The Maya gives a succinct account of one of the New World's great civilizations from its origins through the Spanish Conquest. In this fourth edition, Coe has rewritten his text in the light of the latest field research; he includes recognition of evidence of transoceanic contact. A few of the classic sites considered include Rio Bec, Chenes, Cobá, Puuc, Tikal, and

Cópan. Coe treats many significant topics, including Maya political life, kingship, warfare, religious beliefs, and mythical figures. He also deals with art, industry, the nature of Maya writing, the calendar, and ideas concerning the sun, moon, and stars.

Mexico was written as a companion work to Coe's *The Maya*. Coe discusses the pre-Columbian civilizations of Mexico from 1500 B.C. to the Spanish Conquest, including the Olmecs, Toltecs, and Aztecs, all the while detailing essential elements of history, society, religion, geography, and archaeology. This third edition includes the results of recent investigations at the Olmec sites of San Lorenzo and Chalcatzingo; Teotihuacan, the New World's largest city; Tula, capital of the Toltecs; the valley of Oaxaca; murals at Cocaztla that demonstrate the presence of Mayas in central Mexico; the uncovering and excavation of the Great Temple of the Aztecs at Tenochtitlan, in the center of modern Mexico City; and the Great Pyramid of Cholula.

A Reader Notes an Expression That Is Unique to Nephi

Richard Rust, professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, whose research has been published by F.A.R.M.S. in the past, has noticed phraseology that is unique to individual Book of Mormon prophets. He writes to F.A.R.M.S. that the phrase "my soul delighteth" appears to be unique to Nephi. It is a beautiful expression, which Nephi uses ten times: for example, "my soul delighteth in the scriptures" (2 Nephi 4:15); "my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord" (2 Nephi 4:16); "my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ" (2

Nephi 11:4); and "my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah" (2 Nephi 25:5). Nephi's brother Jacob is the only other prophet who uses "soul" and "delight" together at all: "let your soul delight in fatness" (2 Nephi 9:51).

Thus Rust sees "my soul delighteth" as a hallmark of Nephi's writing. Since it appears to be unique to Nephi and not randomly scattered through the book (as would presumably have been the case if one writer—Joseph Smith—had written the book), Rust finds this unique usage another piece of circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Welch Takes Leave of Absence

A leave of absence from the F.A.R.M.S. board of directors for John W. Welch has been approved during the time that he serves as the editor of *BYU Studies*. Welch was the founding president of F.A.R.M.S. and has served on its board of directors throughout the life of the foundation. His contributions to the success of the foundation's efforts have been considerable and essential.

Welch will continue to work with F.A.R.M.S. in an advisory role, and he will continue to direct and edit the *Ancient Texts and Mormon Studies* series and several books. Once his duties with *BYU Studies* are completed, it is planned that he will resume his role as a voting member of the board of directors of F.A.R.M.S.

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Hofer Honored

DeeAnn was an employee of F.A.R.M.S. for several years in the mid-1980s. She worked on several projects, notably doing data entry for the first Book of Mormon bibliography, published in 1982 and revised in 1987. She also worked on the Biblical Law bibliography and several other projects.

DeeAnn has been confined to a wheelchair her entire life. She was born with a condition known as spina bifida. While working for F.A.R.M.S., DeeAnn earned a double major at BYU in Education and Special Education. She now teaches third grade in Orem. As Ms. Wheelchair Utah she will carry out many duties, including frequent public speaking on behalf of the disabled.