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The Newsletter of
the Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

April 1999

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

FARMS Lecture Series Focuses on Book of Abraham

During a March lecture series at Brigham Young University, three Latter-day Saint scholars shared recent research on the Book of Abraham. This research supports the ancient origin and character of the Book of Abraham. Sponsored by FARMS, the free public lectures drew large crowds, filling an auditorium to capacity and necessitating overflow accommodations. (The final lecture, "Abraham's Creation Drama," given by Hugh Nibley on 6 April, will be covered in next month's newsletter.)

The series began on 3 March with a lecture by John Gee titled "A History of the Joseph Smith Papyri and Book of Abraham." Gee, an Egyptologist and assistant research professor at FARMS, unraveled the absorbing story of the discovery of ancient Egyptian papyrus manuscripts as well as their

eventual purchase, translation, and publication by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Gee noted that although in 1967 New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art returned to the LDS Church 10 papyrus fragments from what were once three separate manuscripts, Joseph Smith originally possessed at least five papyri, two of which were long rolls almost certainly destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871. The extant fragments probably amount to no more than 13 percent of what Joseph Smith once had, said Gee, who concluded that the Book of Abraham was translated from a part of the papyri that is now missing. Gee summarized theories about the relationship between the Book of Abraham and the papyri, the date of the Book of Abraham, how

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CPART Assesses Manuscript Archives in Beirut, Vatican

In February, Daniel C. Peterson and E. Jan Wilson of the FARMS Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) visited with officials in Beirut, Lebanon, and at the Vatican Apostolic Library in Rome to determine the feasibility of digitally imaging ancient religious manuscripts for inclusion in a CD-ROM database. If undertaken, the project stands to benefit not only the many communities whose religious heritages will be preserved, but also Westerners who know very little about Syriac, Christian Arabic, and Armenian theology, liturgy, philosophy, and history—much of it relevant to the study of early Christianity.

BEIRUT

In Beirut, Peterson and Wilson met with Father Samir Khalil of St. Joseph's University, who con-

ducted them to manuscript archives in a monastery and two universities and introduced them to key people, all of them supportive of the project. The tour allayed the CPART team's initial concerns about the nature and quantity of ancient writings in Beirut and possible political sensitivities regarding access to them.

"For Western scholars wanting to delve into the long-neglected field of Eastern Christianity, Lebanon is an ideal point of entry," says Peterson, director of CPART and BYU professor of Islamic studies and Arabic. "Preserved there in the ancient heartland of Christianity is a treasure trove of early Christian materials." Much of the material is written in Syriac, the Christian form of Aramaic, and many monastic libraries in Beirut also contain

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The Foundation for
Ancient Research
and Mormon Studies

FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 125

Why Nephi Wrote the Small Plates: Serving Practical Needs

Nephi wrote his small plates soon after important events such as Lehi's death, Nephi's separation from his rebellious brothers, and the establishment of the reign of kings (see last month's research update). Recognizing when he wrote, we can better appreciate not only Nephi's stated reasons for writing the small plates but also subtle underlying motivations behind his inspired selection and treatment of this material.

We can assume that Nephi wrote his second account (the small plates) for many good reasons and from a particular vantage point. Although the large plates contained the prophecies of Lehi and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 19:1), that earlier record nevertheless must have been insufficient in certain respects, thus warranting the construction of an entirely new set of plates and the rewriting of the basic story. What was missing with the large plates? Why did the Lord direct Nephi to make the small plates, and what additional purposes guided Nephi in that undertaking?

We can begin to answer these questions by noting several characteristics of the small plates. Six practical features yield important clues about the new contributions added by the small plates.

1. *Stated purposes.* The small plates of Nephi feature several

overt statements of purpose. The Lord may have needed Nephi to state his purposes more directly than before. Nephi says the small plates were written for the "instruction" and "profit" of his people (1 Nephi 19:3; 2 Nephi 5:30). The record thus served two purposes: to record Nephi's ministry among his people and to help others (such as Jacob and Joseph) to teach the people faith in God (see 1 Nephi 1:20; 6:4).

2. *A small, manageable document.* Nephi may have wanted to secure a record smaller than the presumably cumbersome large plates. A smaller record could be hidden more readily and carried more easily by a priest. If the large plates contained longer text that rambled, Nephi may have seen a need to make the small plates version concise and thus more manageable and useful.

3. *A clear, plain text.* Compared with the large plates, the small plates contained words that were "plain and precious" (1 Nephi 19:3). With hindsight, Nephi could see the end from the beginning, so his account could be clearer, plainer, and focused on information deemed more precious than the earlier material.

4. *A polished, organized presentation.* The writing on the small plates was carefully crafted. Several people have suggested

various ways in which Nephi employed chiasmic and other literary features in presenting his story. It would seem that these literary refinements were introduced into the text as the materials on the large plates were revised.

5. *A specific audience.* The small plates are directed explicitly to a specific audience: Nephi's own people (see 1 Nephi 19:3; 2 Nephi 5:30). While modern readers are the beneficiaries of Nephi's attentions, his immediate concern was chiefly with the survival of his own small group as they precariously forged their way into yet another wilderness, hoping to withstand the attacks of their enemies that were sure to follow.

6. *A second witness.* The small plates comprised a second witness to the information contained in the large plates. It was common practice in the ancient world for important documents to be prepared in duplicate to safeguard against loss or alteration and to satisfy the spirit of the Mosaic law of witnesses.

These and several other characteristics shed light on our understanding of the precious small plates. Their characteristics mesh thoroughly with the known circumstances in which they were written.

By John W. Welch

Dulling Occam's Razor

William of Occam, an important medieval philosopher, became famous for using a rule of logic that has become a fundamental building block of modern scientific analysis. In one of its more popular formulations, this principle, known as Occam's Razor, considers it axiomatic that the simplest possible solution is the best solution. In many cases, this approach is reasonable. For example, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line (on a Euclidean plane), and a simple computer program takes less memory and therefore runs faster than a more sophisticated one. In other cases, however, Occam's Razor does not seem to apply. This is particularly true in the arts, humanities, and religion.

As commonly applied, Occam's Razor shuns metaphysics and assumes that the world is essentially simple and uniform, not complex or convoluted. Occam's medieval worldview assumed that God had created the world out of nothing, in an orderly fashion. The earth was the center of the cosmos, and the species of life on this planet were relatively few and the boundaries between them distinct and clear. Given these conditions, it made sense to consider the simplest, observable answers to be the best.

But in modern times, what gives anyone the impression that the world is simple? What justification is there for believing that logical explanations of complex phenomena should, in order to be persuasive, be straightforward?

The human drive for simple explanations is persistent and powerful. The prevailing theories of creation and evolution are vast oversimplifications of complex processes. Such popular theories derive much of their appeal from their simplicity. This is true of the big bang theory of the origin of the universe, the theistic explanations of creationism *ex nihilo*, and the basic theories of evolution that trace all living organisms back to a single, simple life source. People are comfortable with these theories in large part because they are simple to state, imagine, and comprehend. But those theories may also be overly simplistic.

If the world is complex, there is no reason to believe that any satisfactory explanation of its nature or origin should be simple. In cutting through this complexity, Occam's Razor may also sever vital arteries.

For example, in music, simple melodies are beautiful, but simple symphonies are banal. In painting, simple designs are important building blocks, but masterworks such as the Sistine Chapel flourish because of their complexity. In jurisprudence, simple rules of law are usually misleading or unhelpful. Similarly, in literature and the humanities, simple characters are lifeless and colorless, simple rhyme schemes are abhorrent, and simple explanations are hollow.

Religious matters are also known for their complexity. Efforts to reduce the eternal and infinite nature of God or the atonement of Jesus Christ to

creeds, analogies, or systematic theologies are unbecoming and unsuccessful. Explaining Jesus as a simple Jewish peasant whose followers mythologized and exalted him offers a perfectly simple theory that appeals to many modern biblical scholars, but ultimately this oversimplification leaves more questions about early Christianity unanswered than it resolves. Likewise, it would be relatively easy for scientific minds to conclude that Joseph Smith was a pious impostor and that the Book of Mormon was simply a product of his cultural environment. After all, from a strictly objective standpoint it is simple to see that books don't come from angels. But because the underlying matter is fundamentally complex, such facile explanations do not ultimately satisfy.

Without the simplifying and clarifying efforts of science and logic, our world would be chaotic, unproductive, disorganized, and confusing. However, our desire for simple explanations may prevent us from appropriately considering complex truths. To make this mistake is to apply Occam's Razor indiscriminately, as a kind of mantra or talisman of truth. In our search for truth and understanding, it is well to keep in mind that eternal truth may surprise us all—as it surely did Moses when he beheld all the inhabitants of the earth and “worlds without number” (see Moses 1:8–10, 27–33)—in being more complex and astonishing than Occam, or any of the rest of us, ever imagined. —Contributed by John W. Welch

Scholar watch

Nibley Fellowships Assist Rising Scholars

For a number of years FARMS has sponsored a graduate fellowship program that gives financial aid to students pursuing advanced degrees in fields of special interest to FARMS. Named in honor of eminent Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley, the Nibley Fellowship is made possible by generous donations from individuals committed to helping further the mission of the Foundation.

The goal of the program is to foster the next generation of faithful scholars who will contribute to the work of FARMS. To this end, FARMS awards several fellowships each year to students pursuing M.A. or Ph.D. degrees in accredited programs at universities throughout the United States and abroad. Depending on the availability of funding and the number of successful candidates each year, awards range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars per year. Fellowship recipients can use the funds however they choose.

Although FARMS strives to help as many qualified applicants as possible, the award process is competitive. Fellowships are not automatically granted or automatically renewed. Successful candidates must be pursuing their graduate studies in areas directly related to the work and mission of FARMS. For an application, write to M. Gerald Bradford, director of research at FARMS. The deadline is 1 June. Current Nibley fellows seeking to renew their fellowships must reapply by the same deadline each year.

In the past four years FARMS has awarded a total of 38 fellowships. Following is a list of Nibley fellows during that period, identified by name, field of study, university, and expected degree.

1998-99

Dan Belnap, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, BYU, M.A. program; **David Bokovoy**, Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, Brandeis University, M.A. program; **Mark B. Child**, Classic Maya Civilization, Anthropology, Yale University, Ph.D. program; **Carl Griffin**, Early Syrian Christianity, School of Arts and Sciences, Catholic University of America, Ph.D. program; **Taylor Halverson**, Biblical Studies, Yale Divinity School, Yale University, M.A. program; **Melissa Halverson**, Hebrew and Greek, Yale Divinity School, Yale University, M.A. program; **Frank F. Judd Jr.**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ph.D. candidate (writing dissertation); **Jennifer C. Lane**, Early and Medieval Christian Thought, Claremont Graduate University, Ph.D. candidate (writing dissertation); **Jared A. Ludlow**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Graduate

Theological Union and University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. candidate (writing dissertation); **Kerry Muhlestein**, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D. program; **Boyd Peterson**, Bible as Literature, Comparative Literature, University of Utah, Ph.D. program; **Becky Lyn Schulthies**, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Brigham Young University, M.A. program; **John S. Thompson**, Egyptology, Asian and Middle Eastern Languages, University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. program.

1997-98

Mark B. Child, Classic Maya Civilization, Anthropology, Yale University, Ph.D. program; **Allen J. Christenson**, Pre-Columbian Maya Art History, Art History, University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D. program; **Allison D. Clark**, Early Christian and Medieval Studies, School of Theology, Boston University, M.A. program; **Carl Griffin**, Early Syrian Christianity, School of Arts and Sciences, Catholic University of America, Ph.D. program; **Brian M. Hauglid**, Arabic Studies, Middle East Center, University of Utah, Ph.D. program; **Frank F. Judd Jr.**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ph.D. program; **Jennifer C. Lane**, Early and Medieval Christian Thought, Claremont Graduate School, Ph.D. program; **Jared A. Ludlow**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Graduate Theological Union and University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. program; **Becky Lyn Schulthies**, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Brigham Young University, M.A. program; **I. Andrew Teasdale**, Instructional Systems Technology, University of Indiana, Ph.D. program.

1996-97

Allen J. Christenson, Pre-Columbian Maya Art History, Art History, University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D. program; **Allison D. Clark**, Church History, School of Theology, Boston University, M.A. program; **Carl Griffin**, Early Syrian Christianity, Early Christian Studies Program, Catholic University of America, M.A. program; **Brian M. Hauglid**, Arabic, Middle East Center, University of Utah, Ph.D. program; **Kristian S. Heal**, Syriac Studies, Wolfson College, Oxford University, M.A. program; **Frank F. Judd Jr.**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ph.D. program; **Jennifer C. Lane**, Early and Medieval Christian Thought, Claremont Graduate School, Ph.D. program; **Jared A. Ludlow**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Graduate Theological Union and University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. program; **Eric E. Vernon**, Biblical Studies, Divinity School, Yale University, M.A. program.

1995-96

Allen J. Christenson, Pre-Columbian Maya Art History, Art History, University of Texas at Austin, M.A. program; **John Gee**, Egyptology, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Yale University, Ph.D. program; **Carl Griffin**, Early Christian Studies, Catholic University of America, M.A. program; **Frank F. Judd Jr.**, New Testament and Early Christianity, Religious Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ph.D. program; **Anthony Rivera Jr.**, Biblical Hebrew, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles, Ph.D. program; **Gaye Strathearn**, New Testament Studies, Claremont Graduate School, Ph.D. program.

Insights revisited

Joseph Smith and Mohammed

In his book *The World and the Prophets*, Hugh Nibley observes that critics are not slow to point out superficial resemblances between our modern prophets and other men of their time. For example, Joseph Smith founded a church, and so did other men; he claimed revelation from heaven, and so did they; he was persecuted, and so were they; he read the Bible, and so did they; and because they were impostors, so accordingly was he. This last point, of course, is not supported by the superficial resemblances. What we must ask in the case of the modern prophet is what we must ask in the case of Jesus: where was he *essentially different* from all the rest?

Eduard Meyer was one of the most learned men of modern times. Ancient history was his field, and the origin of religions was his special interest. He wrote authoritative works on the origin of religions and singled out the Latter-day Saints as one of the great original religions. He finds the closest resemblance between the Mormon Church and the primitive Christians. They resemble each other in every detail, even to their defects. Meyer also finds resemblances between Joseph Smith and Mohammed, but Nibley points out that these are superficial and incidental compared with the essential points on which Meyer believes the two men, both claiming to be prophets, stand in complete antithesis to each other:

Mohammed was beset by long periods of self-mistrust and black despair and, according to some sources, even attempted suicide. He was greatly worried that he might be insane or that he had seen a devil rather than an angel. In contrast to this, "it is for Joseph Smith very significant," wrote Meyer, "that there is in his case absolutely no question of any such doubts and misgivings."¹ Meyer congratulates Mohammed for having the normal human reaction and chides Smith for not having it.

Meyer holds up the exemplary caution, restraint, and shrewdness of Mohammed, showing how he gained confidence with practice and through the years carefully worked out his doctrine and his story, correcting, revising, and building it up. Unlike Joseph Smith, or the Old Testament prophets, Mohammed never actually sees anything in his revelations, but reads slowly and very painfully from a book. Smith finds himself in company with the

ancient prophets of Israel. Mohammed does not.

The most important difference between the two purported prophets, according to Meyer, is that "Joseph Smith has a belief in the continuation of direct prophetic inspiration, speaking in tongues, etc., and along with that, of personal inspiration which every believer can receive. . . . Mohammed, on the other hand, knows only of one single book, that is the Bible, with which he has a vague acquaintance."

For Joseph Smith, the manifestations of the other world are real and matter-of-fact. "For Mohammed . . . there is only one miracle—the revelation of the words of the divine book and the appearance of angels. He denied any power to do miracles, and his followers have no special power of any kind."

Joseph Smith and Mohammed both claim to have given the world a revealed book. But precisely on this point Meyer finds the most complete (if not the most important) difference between them. After all, hundreds of men have claimed to have given inspired writings to the world—there is nothing in the mere *claim* to justify or condemn a prophet. But Smith's book is like no other. Whereas "for Mohammed the book always remains in the hands of the angel," Smith not only read but also translated his book, which he carried around from place to place; he actually copied out characters of the book and circulated them around for all, including his worst enemies, to look at. "Any such thing," says Meyer, "would never have occurred to Mohammed."

Eduard Meyer's final conclusion is that "Mohammed's revelations stand higher than those of Joseph Smith, because in his case we feel . . . something of the power of a conviction wrung out by hard mental toil, and even at times we feel something of a poetic inspiration." Of this, not the minutest trace in Joseph Smith. Meyer can respect the mental effort of the founder of Islam wrestling with his human limitations, but Joseph Smith remains an enigma to him. Meyer has no patience with this upstart who never doubts in the face of the most appalling persecution, and amid all his terrible trials and struggles never struggles for inspiration. Nibley points out that Meyer's impatience with Joseph Smith is actually a strong witness to his prophetic calling, for Meyer treats Ezekiel in exactly the same way.

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Joseph Smith and Mohammed (continued from page 5)

Nibley concludes: "Here we have an interesting test. Meyer likes and understands Mohammed who, though a remarkable man to say the least, is after all just a man who reacts as one would expect any normal man to react if he were trying to work himself into a state of religious conviction. The vagueness, the mystery, the struggle, the doubt—every religious leader experiences them, and we all have some idea of what Mohammed went through. He is, so to speak, just another preacher, though a great one. But not so Joseph Smith! Meyer finds him, like Ezekiel, crass, literal, unpoetic, devoid of power of fantasy, unmoved by doubts, unennobled by despairing struggles. Here are men that cannot by any effort be fitted into Meyer's catalogue of religious thinkers. If the nature of his prophetic claims placed him completely apart from all the other religious men of his day, it also disqualified

Joseph Smith for classification with any other type of prophet than that represented by Ezekiel, Christ, and the ancient apostles. However much he may have resembled other men in other things, when it came to his prophetic calling, Joseph Smith was not a Mohammed struggling to convince himself and find poetic expression; he was not a scholar of divinity seeking to unriddle the scriptures for his less-educated or less-inspired fellows; and certainly he was not just another preacher. *He was a true Prophet of God.*" —Adapted from Hugh Nibley, "Prophets and Preachers," in *The World and the Prophets* (1987).

NOTE

1. This and other quotations are from Eduard Meyer, *Origin and History of the Mormons*, trans. H. Rahde and E. Seach (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1961).

Scripture insight

"The Lord Appointed Other Seventy Also"

Our understanding of the Seventy in early Christian times is dim because the Bible and historical sources in general contain such scant information concerning that priestly office. Who were the Seventy? What was their calling? Was there one body of Seventy or two? As we search for answers, insights from restoration scripture and history, as well as hints from the early church fathers Eusebius and Clement, may prove helpful.

While all four New Testament Gospel accounts discuss the Twelve Apostles, only Luke recounts the calling of the Seventy. The charge Jesus gave the Seventy, as recorded in Luke 10:1–12, is essentially the same as the one he had given to the Twelve (see Luke 9:1–6). The King James version of Luke 10:1 says that "the Lord appointed other seventy also." Some have thought this referred to a second body of Seventy. But the Greek can mean "seventy others," which would suggest that Christ selected seventy other apostles.

The Greek from which we get *apostle* derives from the verb "to send" and means "one sent" or "envoy." Jesus told the Twelve, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21), and Jesus is called an apostle in Hebrews 3:1. In Luke

9:2, Jesus sends the Twelve Apostles, while in Luke 10:1 he sends the Seventy. There is no mention of another group of Seventy being sent out in the interval between these two events.

The Latter-day Saint view is that while the Twelve Apostles hold keys, both they and the Seventy are all called as "special witnesses" of Christ "in all the world," with the Seventy serving "under the direction of the Twelve . . . in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations" (D&C 107:23, 25, 34). Indeed, several passages from early LDS records call the Seventy by the term *apostle*. Under the date of 28 December 1835, the *History of the Church* notes, "This day the Council of the Seventy met to render an account of their travels and ministry, since they were ordained to that Apostleship" (2:346). At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in March 1836, Joseph Smith "called upon the quorums and congregation of Saints to acknowledge the presidents of Seventies who act as their representatives, as Apostles and special witnesses to the nations, to assist the Twelve in opening the Gospel kingdom among all people" (*History of the Church*, 2:418).

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“Other Seventy” (continued from page 6)

Joseph Smith's successor, Brigham Young, also addressed the Seventies as “apostles to the nations to carry the gospel; and when we send you to build up the kingdom, we will give you the keys, and power and authority” (*History of the Church*, 7:307). During Brigham Young's presidency, apostle Wilford Woodruff spoke of “the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy Apostles” (*Journal of Discourses*, 4:147; see 18:126).

Our major extrabiblical source for information on the Seventy called by Jesus is the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius, who wrote:

The names of the apostles of our Saviour are known to every one from the Gospels. But there exists no catalogue of the seventy disciples. Barnabas, indeed, is said to have been one of them, of whom the Acts of the apostles makes mention in various places, and especially Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians [2:1, 9, 13]. They say that Sosthenes also, who wrote to the Corinthians with Paul [1 Corinthians 1:1], was one of them. This is the account of Clement in the fifth book of his *Hypotyposes*, in which he also says that Cephas was one of the seventy disciples, a man who bore the same name as the apostle Peter, and the one concerning whom Paul says, “When Cephas came to Antioch I withstood him to his face” [Galatians 2:11]. Matthias, also, who was numbered with the apostles in the place of Judas, and the one who was honored by being made a candidate with him [Acts 1:23–26], are likewise said to have been deemed worthy of the same calling with the seventy. They say that Thaddeus also was one of them, concerning whom I shall presently relate an account which has come down to us.¹

Eusebius also attributes to Clement's *Hypotyposes* the declaration that “the Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge [*gnosis*] to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the apostles, and the rest of the apostles to the seventy of whom Barnabas was one.”² Unfortunately, the original work has not survived, though in *Stromata* 2.20, which is extant, Clement indicates that Barnabas was one of the Seventy. Clement lived in the second century A.D., and therefore his writings reflect relatively early traditions.

Of particular interest is the fact that Eusebius indicates that Matthias and Joseph Barsabbas Justus, the two candidates to take Judas Iscariot's

place in the Twelve (see Acts 1:15–26), were both members of the Seventy. Another possible member of the Seventy who later became one of the Twelve is Thaddaeus. According to Matthew 10:3, Lebaeus Thaddaeus was one of the original Twelve. He is also listed as one of the Twelve in Mark 3:18. But the corresponding list of the apostles found in Luke 6:16 replaces him with “Judas the brother of James.” But, as we have seen earlier, Eusebius wrote that Thaddaeus was one of the Seventy and promised to say more of him. The additional information is found in his *Ecclesiastical History* 1.13.4: “Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, under divine impulse sent Thaddeus, who was also numbered among the seventy disciples of Christ, to Edessa, as a preacher and evangelist of the teaching of Christ.”³

If the Sosthenes mentioned by Eusebius and in 1 Corinthians 1:1 is the same individual mentioned in Acts 18:17, it is very unlikely that he could have been one of the original Seventy, for he was a Corinthian (see Acts 18:1), while the original Seventy would have been Palestinian Jews. But he may well have been a late member of the Quorum of the Seventy. Barnabas and Paul, who are called apostles (see Acts 14:14) but are never said to number among the Twelve, may in fact have been of the Seventy. They, along with Judas Barsabbas and Silas, were called “chief men among the brethren” at the time they were sent by “the apostles and elders” as envoys to Antioch (Acts 15:22).

The Ethiopic *Kebrā Nagast* 102 calls Stephen “[one] of the Seventy Disciples” and adds, “Now among the Seventy Disciples there were seven who were chosen for service with the Twelve Apostles, to perform service with Silas, and Barnabas, and Mark and Luke and Paul.”⁴ The seven “chosen for service” are mentioned in Acts 6:5 and include Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Luke and Paul, being later converts, were obviously not among the original Seventy chosen by Christ, but may have been added to that body to replace others who had died.

Though very little is known about the Seventy in the early Christian church, the few hints left us in the Bible⁵ and in the writings of Clement and Eusebius are instructive. While we cannot ascertain the reliability of the traditions about specific members of the Seventy, these early accounts suggest

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“Other Seventy” (continued from page 7)

that replacement members of the Twelve may sometimes have been called from the Seventy. This, in turn, indicates that the earliest Christians intended that these two ruling bodies be perpetuated.

—Contributed by John A. Tvedtnes

NOTES

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.12.1–3, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 1:98–99.

2. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.1.4, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1:104.

3. In *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1:100. The fact that one of the Twelve here sends one of the Seventy is in harmony with the role of these two offices as described in D&C 107:34, 38.

4. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (London: Medici Society, 1922), 194.

5. See S. Kent Brown, “The Seventy in Scripture,” in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 1:25–45.

FARMS Lecture Series (continued from page 1)

the text was transmitted from Abraham’s day, and the nature and origin of the facsimiles. He concluded that the historical record does not support the theories of critics who dispute the ancient origins of the Book of Abraham.

In a 10 March lecture John A. Tvedtnes, associate director of research at FARMS, addressed the topic “Abrahamic Lore in Support of the Book of Abraham.” He shared the results of an extensive search of ancient religious texts that mention Abraham. This material will be fully documented in a forthcoming book compiled and edited by Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee with assistance from others. Thus far, researchers have found that more than 70 texts from ancient and medieval times (including Jewish, Christian, Samaritan, Muslim, Falasha, and Mandaean texts) contain 39 themes of the Book of Abraham account that are missing from the biblical book of Genesis.

As far as can be determined, only one text, *Antiquities of the Jews* (written in the first century A.D. by the Jewish historian Josephus), was available to Joseph Smith, Tvedtnes said. He noted that Joseph Smith had that book late in his ministry, though perhaps not when he translated the Egyptian papyri years earlier, and that *Antiquities* contains only one strand of the Abraham account (Abraham’s teaching astronomy to the Egyptians) that figures in the Book of Abraham but not in Genesis.

Tvedtnes cited many examples of extrabiblical traditions that support the unique elements of the Book of Abraham, such as details concerning idolatry, human sacrifice, priesthood, revelation, ancient records, Pharaoh, and famine in Abraham’s day. After exploring a few of these topics in detail,

Tvedtnes expressed amazement that so many extrabiblical texts have recently come to light in support of the authenticity of the Book of Abraham.

On 17 March John Gee delivered another lecture, titled “The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri.” Gee explored territory that very few scholars have surveyed. He focused his remarks on a Theban priest named Hor, who is listed on one of the Joseph Smith Papyri as its original owner.

To answer the question of when Hor lived, Gee began by explaining the methods used to date the Joseph Smith Papyri to the Roman period and why those methods are unreliable in this case. For example, paleographic (handwriting) dating is valid only if there are enough date-specific texts from the period in question available for thorough comparison. But dated hieratic texts for the period after 600 B.C. are few, leaving gaps in the paleographic record—and most of the Joseph Smith Papyri are written in hieratic. In addition, Roman period manuscripts were written with a reed pen, whereas the papyri in question were written with a brush (a stylus made by chewing the end of a stiff rush), a practice abandoned by Roman times. Thus a Roman date for the papyri is very unlikely, Gee said.

According to Gee, a more fruitful approach is prosopography, which enabled one scholar to assemble enough genealogical data to reconstruct Hor’s family tree and date the papyri to the first half of the second century B.C.

Gee then discussed Hor’s priestly office in Egypt, his superior literacy, and the possibility that Facsimiles 1 and 3 belonged not to the Book of Breathing (since they are not the standard vignette for that

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FARMS Lecture Series (continued from page 8)

work), but to a missing part of the Papyrus of Hor, which may have contained the Book of Abraham. He concluded that, because several Egyptian traditions about Abraham date to both before and after the Joseph Smith Papyri, it should not be surprising that a Theban priest from the Ptolemaic period possessed a copy of the Book of Abraham.

On 24 March professional illustrator Michael Lyon, in a lecture titled "Appreciating Hypocephali as Works of Art and Faith," discussed Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham from the standpoint of art history.

Lyon explained that the Greek term *hypocephalus* (literally "under the head") refers to the Egyptian funerary practice of placing under a mummy's head a document that was believed to bring light and heat to the deceased's body and to benefit the departed spirit in the next life. According to Lyon, who relies on the scholarly work of many others, Facsimile 2 reproduces a hypocephalus that belonged to a man named Sheshonq who lived more than 2,000 years ago in Egypt. Lyon discussed the process by which Reuben Hedlock made an extremely accurate woodcut of the original hypocephalus in Nauvoo in 1842 so that the image (now known as Facsimile 2) could be published in the *Times and Seasons* together with Facsimiles 1 and 3.

Although the original hypocephalus has been lost, the LDS Church owns an early (presumably 1840s-era) copy of it. This copy indicates the lacunae, or missing parts, in the original, deteriorating hypocephalus once in Joseph Smith's possession. The artifact was probably made of black ink drawn on stucco smeared on a linen base to help prevent

breakage. Lyon also suggested that Joseph probably instructed Hedlock to fill in the lacunae in his wood-block reconstruction of Facsimile 2 and that the inserted text came from the Book of Breathings of Hor, part of the Joseph Smith Papyri.

Lyon noted that the foremost Egyptologist working with these ancient texts, Dr. Edith Varga of Budapest, has included Facsimile 2 in her collection of 150 authentic hypocephali. Upon seeing BYU scholar Michael Rhodes's translation of Facsimile 2, Varga agreed that the facsimile's inscriptions are legible and that the facsimile is thus a reliable copy. Lyon shared a plausible reconstruction of Sheshonq's hypocephalus and explained how the Egyptians made hypocephali. He compared Facsimile 2 to other important hypocephali and speculated on what aspects of astronomy Abraham may have taught the Egyptians that so captivated the most sophisticated court in the world.

In conclusion, Lyon likened Egyptian hypocephali to an archetypal motif known as the "divine center," a diagram of the cosmos using circles and squares that appears in art and architecture throughout the world. He showed many slides documenting this motif across cultures and throughout history—a motif typified by the shield of Achilles in the West and the mandala tradition in the East. Filled with great meaning, these artistic patterns express a universal yearning for the divine center and, according to Lyon, may recall father Abraham's teaching of astronomical truths to the Egyptians.

Transcripts of these lectures may be obtained using the enclosed order form.

CPART (continued from page 1)

Christian Arabic and Armenian texts, many of which date to the earliest beginnings of Christianity.

Those who value these irreplaceable manuscripts are anxious to see them preserved through publication. According to Father Samir, this literature is in jeopardy because it is so vulnerable to damage and loss. He points out that much of it has already been lost forever as a result of civil war and the collateral damage to manuscript repositories.

Another reason to create a database of the archives and make it available to scholars and oth-

ers, Samir says, is to foster Western appreciation for Christian Arabic literature. Peterson agrees, adding that this literature has been neglected because Arabic-speaking students focus their attention on Islamic studies, while students interested in Christian religious studies do not study Arabic, seeing it as an Islamic language and not realizing just how much early Christian literature was written in Arabic.

Because few Western scholars read Arabic (Peterson notes that a university chair or professorship

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CPART (continued from page 9)

devoted to Christian Arabic studies does not exist anywhere in the world), vast libraries of early Christian manuscripts remain unplumbed.

Jan Wilson, associate director of CPART, is one scholar who can appreciate the insights into Judeo-Christian theology that the Syriac material affords. For example, in working extensively with these ancient texts, he found that the word usually translated as "eunuchs" in Matthew 19:12 actually means "believers" in Aramaic—the language in which, according to many scholars, the Gospel of Matthew was originally composed. Wilson is hopeful that there are early Syriac texts in Lebanon that shed further light on other perplexing New Testament passages.

Although the Syriac project is worthwhile, questions remain about funding, logistics, and scope. Because the volume of material is so enormous, initial efforts would probably focus on selecting only enough material to fit on a single compact disc. Later work might entail digitally imaging more selections or producing an ongoing translation series in book form.

THE VATICAN

From Beirut, Peterson and Wilson traveled to Rome, Italy, to explore the possibility of imaging the excellent collection of ancient Syriac documents preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Library.

Father Bawai Soro, bishop of the Assyrian Church of the East, helped open a dialogue between the CPART team and ecclesiastical authorities overseeing the Vatican archives. Although Peterson's and Wilson's request received preliminary approval from the Pontifical Council on Christian Unity, the library must resolve pending legal issues before beginning a joint project with CPART.

"We were heartened by what we saw and excited about the possibility of working with them," says Peterson, who describes the Vatican Library's vast collections as "an astonishing treasure of Christian and pagan documents, some of which go back many hundreds of years."

The exploratory trip was an overall success in several respects. For one thing, the team learned that there is a vast amount of significant ancient Christian documents that merit preservation and scholarly attention through publication. The trip also established important personal and institutional ties that were possible only because of the favorable reputation BYU and FARMS enjoy as a result of their groundbreaking work on the Dead Sea Scrolls and related projects. In addition, the trip reconfirmed that the CPART team's expertise with modern imaging technology is in high demand and can continue to build bridges of understanding on unexpected fronts.

Peterson points out that the Syriac project in Beirut alone has so much potential that it will tax CPART's limited resources and require fund-raising if the decision is made to pursue it.

INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

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The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) encourages and supports research about the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ and other ancient scriptures. It also works to preserve ancient religious documents.

FARMS is a nonprofit educational foundation affiliated with Brigham Young University. Its main research interests include ancient history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to the scriptures. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of the scriptures, solid research and academic perspectives alone can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about the scriptures.

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It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.