



# BOOK OF MORMON CENTRAL

<https://bookofmormoncentral.org/>

---

Type: Newsletter

---

## Insights, Vol. 19, No. 7 (July 1999)

Editor(s): FARMS Staff

Published by: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies

---



The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) existed from 1979 until 2006, when it was formally incorporated into the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Archived by permission.



The Newsletter of  
the Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

July 1999

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

## Ancient Literary Forms Enhance Meaning and Promote Faith, New Book Says

One of the most important and interesting areas of recent Book of Mormon studies focuses on ancient Hebrew literary forms that can be detected in the English text. Having spent many years in intensive personal study of these forms, Elder Hugh W. Pinnock offers his perspective on their beauty, function, and background in a gorgeous new book, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon*.

Elder Pinnock has labored to understand what scholars (including many non-LDS scholars) have



discovered about these ancient literary forms and has applied this hard-won knowledge to his study of the Book of Mormon. In his book he gives a simple guide to these forms and offers his own discoveries in the hope that they will stimulate others to search for these forms in the scriptures and increase their own understanding and testimonies.

In the introductory chapter he provides background on the history of Hebrew literary forms: "As the classical Greeks studied language, they defined various arrangements of

*continued on page 5*

## Journal Looks at Enigmatic Tree of Life Stone

In the early 1950s archaeologist M. Wells Jakeman claimed that a carved stone monument unearthed in Izapa, Mexico, in 1941 depicted Lehi's vision of the tree of life as reported in the Book of Mormon. As is true for any archaeological find, the accuracy of that initial assessment of the stone dubbed Izapa Stela 5 will either stand or begin to fall in light of further evidence and study, though a definitive determination regarding the stela may simply not be possible.

The latest issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (vol. 8, no. 1) features two articles that offer the latest thinking on the enigmatic Stela 5. Stewart W. Brewer carefully lays out the history of this stela and catalogs the evidence for and against Jakeman's claim. Brewer's survey also reports on

other interpretations, both LDS and non-LDS, concluding with an introduction to the newest drawing of Stela 5 commissioned by the BYU New World Archaeological Foundation (NWAf).

John E. Clark, director of the NWAf, takes up the story of the first publication of the new drawing of Stela 5 by NWAf illustrator Ayax Moreno. Clark describes the importance of Izapa in Mesoamerican culture and history and explains how the drawing was made. In a fascinating study of Stela 5, Clark draws parallels with known Mesoamerican artistic symbols determined by recent scholarship and examines the possibility of Old World connections, looking at specific claims made by Jakeman. He concludes that there is

*continued on page 5*



The Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies

# FARMS UPDATE

A Report on Research in Progress

Number 128

## More on Glowing Stones

In July 1992 *INSIGHTS* reported the development of radioluminescent lights that resemble the shining stones used by the Jaredites (Ether 2:19–3:6; 6:2–3, 10). Made of a highly porous silica matrix called aerogel, these modern lights—whose life expectancy is 20 years—employ tritium gas to produce beta radiation that causes a phosphor such as zinc sulfide to glow.

As we await further scientific advances that might help demystify the physical properties of glowing stones, we can profitably review earlier thinking on this intriguing subject, which reminds us that the scriptural account of Jaredite barges lit by 16 luminous stones is not as fanciful as critics contend.

The *INSIGHTS* article noted that in 1963 Elder Spencer W. Kimball proposed that the Jaredite stones were illuminated “with radium or some other substance not yet rediscovered by our scientists.”

In 1909 Elder B. H. Roberts compared experiments on radioactive materials with the Book of Mormon’s description of the Jaredite stones, noting that both radium and polonium glow in the dark. One scientist noted that polonium could transfer its radiant energy to other substances and suggested that it might be used in the future to generate light without heat or combustion.<sup>1</sup>

In 1927 Janne M. Sjodahl drew the attention of Latter-day Saints to experiments that produced a glow in precious stones by exposing them to cathode rays or to radium. He concluded that the brother of Jared “was in possession . . . of a knowledge that scientists of today are just beginning to dip into” and that it is not “unreasonable to suppose that God could make the stones in the [Jaredite] barges luminous.”<sup>2</sup> The cathode ray tube has since come into common use in radar, television, and computer screens. Some precious stones (notably the ruby) are used in lasers, an acronym for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.”

Stones composed of phosphorescent minerals are also known to glow. Barite will shine for some time in the dark after being exposed to sunlight. In a discussion following a 1996 FARMS brown bag lecture on glowing stones,<sup>3</sup> Hugh Nibley recalled that nearly 50 years earlier a BYU professor found a stone that glowed when squeezed in a vise. The stone was sent to the Colorado School of Mines, where scientists confirmed its glowing properties. According to Nibley, the stone was later destroyed when too much pressure was applied.

Minerologist George Frederick Kunz included stories about glow-

ing stones in his 1913 book *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones*. For example, a treatise written in 1675 by physician Christiani Mentzel concerns a phosphorescent stone discovered in 1604 and called the Bologna or lunar stone. In the dark this stone would give off the light it had received from the sun. The book also cites experiments by Kunz and by others two centuries earlier in which certain diamonds were made to glow in the dark.<sup>4</sup>

For many Latter-day Saints, an interest in glowing stones and how they might relate to the Jaredite stones does not reflect a need to satisfy the minds of unbelievers as much as a desire to understand a curious phenomenon. Of course, increased scientific understanding in this area may or may not illuminate the precise manner by which the Lord caused the brother of Jared’s molten crystalline stones to shine.

### NOTES

1. B. H. Roberts, *New Witness for God* (1909), 3:547–49.

2. Janne M. Sjodahl, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon* (1927), 249.

3. This was a joint presentation by Michael Lyon and John A. Tvedtnes. Tvedtnes’s material appears in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 99–123.

4. George Frederick Kunz, *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (1913; reprint, 1938), 168–70.

By John A. Tvedtnes

## New Volume Elucidates Book of Revelation

*Understanding the Book of Revelation*, a new book by Jay A. Parry and FARMS board member Donald W. Parry, published by Deseret Book, elucidates John the Beloved's stirring vision found in the book of Revelation. The authors draw upon the scriptures, the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and other LDS Church leaders, and insights from Bible scholars to offer a phrase-by-phrase (sometimes word-by-word) commentary on all 22 chapters of Revelation.

The book includes background information for understanding John's rich imagery and symbolism. For example, the notes and commentary for each chapter are preceded by a helpful overview, and six appendixes offer additional informa-

tion such as a convenient list of the key symbols John used and their interpretations.

The authors believe that the most important aspect of the book of Revelation is that it reveals Jesus Christ to us. The first chapter presents a view of the glorious resurrected Lord, and every subsequent chapter throughout the book sets forth doctrines pertaining to his atoning sacrifice, his love and mercy, his divine judgments upon the wicked, and his rewards for the righteous. The authors emphasize that, as a Christ-centered text, the book of Revelation teaches us many important truths about Christ's divine mission, mortal ministry, atoning sacrifice, resurrection, kingship, and glory.

According to BYU professor of church history and doctrine Susan Easton Black, *Understanding the Book of Revelation* is an insightful commentary that clarifies "the veiled, symbolic language of John. . . . This is must reading!" Richard D. Draper, a BYU professor of ancient scripture with expertise in the book of Revelation, considers the Parrys' new book to be "well written, clearly presented, conveniently organized, and doctrinally sound. A fine resource on a difficult but compelling subject." FARMS members can obtain the book at the regular 20 percent discount through FARMS (see the order form) or at participating bookstores.

### Insights revisited

## Gnosticism and the Loss of Prophecy in the Early Christian Church

In his book *The World and the Prophets*, Hugh W. Nibley considers the historical role of Gnostics and their influence on the early Christian church. He explains that in the great Gnostic revolution of the second century, the whole orientation of the church changed completely. What brought this about? It was the ceasing of prophetic voices. The continuing demand in the church for the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy, gave rise to an army of quacks and fakirs who, though discredited in time, left their mark permanently and conspicuously on

the Christian church. These were the Gnostics, so called.

Paul had prophesied in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that prophecies shall be stopped, tongues shall be made to cease, gnosis shall be done away with. These gifts were not simply to fade away; they were going to be taken away. Paul's use of the word *gnosis* leaves us in no doubt as to what it conveyed to the early Christians. Nibley points out that for them it was exactly what we would translate as "a testimony of the gospel." The gnosis is the knowledge acquired only by revelation and

not in ordinary ways. Paul reminds the Colossians that the gnosis is "hidden away" (2:3) and that not everyone has it who claims to.

The first men to write against the Gnostics are always very careful to designate them as the so-called or self-styled Gnostics and their teachings as the *false* gnosis. This shows that there was or had been a real gnosis that those people were imitating.

As long as there were living apostles, Nibley believes, the impostors had been kept in their

## Gnosticism and the Loss of Prophecy (continued from page 3)

place by apostolic authority. But as soon as the apostolic generation passed away, the barriers of apostolic authority were removed, the deceivers had nothing to fear, and overnight the church swarmed with them. Where, then, were the successors of the apostles who should have kept them in their place and continued to wield authority? That authority was not there, and the church found itself in a serious predicament.

The Gnostics had caused an immense sensation and gained a huge and growing following by the electrifying announcement that they had the gnosis. Having made the claim, they were, so to speak, "on the spot." They had to deliver. And so they welcomed any teaching or practice that combined an air of mystery and superior knowledge with a cosmic sweep and scope. They gave secret lessons and charged money for them; they built up elaborate philosophical systems based on abstract and personified concepts; they practiced ordinary magic and specialized in trick miracles; they tried to produce supernatural experiences by the use of drugs and stimulants; they cultivated a large vocabulary of fancy technical words to impress the public.

Nibley points out that it all had one obvious purpose: to give the impression that the powers and gifts and knowledge of the ancient apostles were still on the earth, for that is what they claimed to have but did not have. Quispel writes of the Gnostics that "the proportion of nincompoops and crackpots was greater among them than elsewhere."<sup>1</sup> And yet what a lot of stuff introduced by them was preserved by conventional Christianity—a most suspicious circumstance!

Nibley concludes that the Gnostic experiment proved that the gifts of the Spirit cannot be faked and also how terribly hungry the Christian world was for the spiritual gifts. Most significant, he continues, it proved that the main church was not able to satisfy the demand for spiritual gifts.

The false gnosis would not have stood a chance against the true one, which was conspicuously not there to set up against it. As Neander pointed out long ago, to meet the gnosis-so-called, the church had to invent another gnosis, which it then claimed to be the ancient one.<sup>2</sup> But it was much too late to

regain or claim ancient gifts that one had already denied, and it is not surprising that in setting up its counteragnosis, the main church imitated her rival all down the line. They ended up resembling each other exactly. Defenders of orthodoxy could only oppose the Gnostic doctrine with a new doctrine of their own, and the teachings of these defenders differ from those of the Gnostics they refute only in the matter of terminology.

The rise, prosperity, and absorption of the Gnostics is one of the most significant commentaries on the loss to the church and to the world of the gift of prophecy.—*Adapted from Hugh Nibley, "Prophets and Gnostics," in The World and the Prophets (1987).*

### NOTES

1. Giles Quispel, *Het oudste Christendom en de antieke Cultuur* (Haarlem: Tjeenk, Willink & Zoon, 1951), 1:152.
2. August Neander, *Antignostikus, Geist des Tertullianus* (Berlin: Dummler, 1849), 56; R. A. Lipsius, *Der Gnosticismus, sein Wesen, Ursprung und Entwicklungsgang* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1860), 66.

### Board notes

## FARMS Welcomes New Board Member

John E. Clark is the newest member of the FARMS board of trustees. He is an associate professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University and director of the BYU New World Archaeological Foundation. A specialist in Mesoamerican civilizations for the past 20 years, he has taught courses in anthropology and archaeology, conducted field research in Mexico, and authored many scholarly publications.

Clark received bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology from BYU and a doctorate in anthropology from the University of Michigan. He has acted as a consultant and peer reviewer for FARMS in recent years and is rapidly becoming recognized as one of the leading Olmec scholars in the nation. Clark's formal training and experience in Mesoamerican archaeology and anthropology will be of great value to the board.

## Ancient Literary Forms (continued from page 1)

words scientifically, naming more than two hundred structural patterns. Today literary critics still use many titles the Greeks gave to various writing forms. The Romans developed this discipline further, but after language changes in the Middle Ages, the use of these forms and their classical definitions was almost forgotten.

Knowledge of these Hebrew writing forms and Jewish poetry has been partially resurrected today, but these elements of biblical style are still not broadly understood or even known by

many of today's scripture experts. As far as I can determine, it was well after the publication of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith in 1830 that other books including or explaining these forms arrived in America. This book offers a basic working knowledge of some of the ancient writing forms that can be identified in the scriptures."

Elder Pinnock shows how parallelistic forms of repetition give emphasis and clarity to ancient writing and how an understanding of these parallelistic forms lays the foundation for an under-

standing of almost every other writing form in ancient scripture. After discussing the purposes of the Hebrew forms and some "enemies" to understanding them, he defines many of the most common literary forms and gives many examples from both the Bible and Book of Mormon, formatted to

clearly show the reader where the parallelism is and how it is formed.

Throughout the book Elder Pinnock emphasizes Joseph Smith's divine role as translator and how the Prophet could not have known about or de-

- |   |
|---|
| <p>A <b>wo unto him</b><br/>         B that shall <b>deny</b><br/>         C <b>the Christ</b><br/>         D and his <b>works!</b></p> <p>A Yea, <b>wo unto him</b><br/>         B that shall <b>deny</b> the revelations of<br/>         C <b>the Lord</b>, and that shall say the Lord<br/>         D no longer <b>worketh</b> by revelation</p> |
|---|

(3 Nephi 29:5-6)

liberately crafted the many subtle Hebrew structural devices in the Book of Mormon. He observes, "The beauty and surprising presence of these Hebrew writing forms in the Book of Mormon appear to be an almost untapped reservoir of testimony-strengthening material." Elder Pinnock's book is an invitation to fellow students of the scriptures to deepen their knowledge and appreciation of an intriguing aspect of the Book of Mormon's ancient literary heritage. It can be ordered using the enclosed order form.

## Journal (continued from page 1)

probably no direct connection between the stela and Lehi's dream.

The informative articles by Brewer and Clark are by no means the end of the story on Stela 5, but they demonstrate that by incorporating recent scholarship on Mesoamerican art and symbolism, the new drawing brings us nearer to understanding the intended message of that stela.

This issue of the *Journal* introduces a new series dealing with cultural interpretations of the Book of Mormon. Louis C. Midgley, in "A Singular Reading: The Māori and the Book of Mormon," draws on his experiences as a missionary in New Zealand to explain the Māori reaction to the Book of Mormon. Matthew Roper continues the theme of Mesoamerican parallels with his thorough and entertaining

treatise on swords and cimeters in the Book of Mormon. With the help of a magnificent mural by famed artist Diego Rivera, Bruce H. Yerman explains the link between Ammon and the Mesoamerican custom of smiting off arms. Marilyn Arnold, in "Unlocking the Sacred Text," shows how to go beyond a superficial reading of the Book of Mormon to find a text that "almost magically expands to meet [one's] increased ability to comprehend it." The last feature article is a photo essay by George C. Potter titled "A New Candidate in Arabia for the 'Valley of Lemuel.'"

The New Light department illuminates issues concerning the so-called Lehi's Cave near Jerusalem, the location of Book of Mormon Nahom, the Anthon

*continued on page 6*

## Journal (continued from page 5)

transcript, and more on the name Alma. Book of Mormon Answers explores sacrificial offerings among the Nephites. James P. Bell is the featured book-recommending "librarian" for this issue, and Out of the Dust responds to the recent spate of reports about a Jaredite barge found beneath Lake Michigan and also covers excavations in Piedras Negras, the unearthing of a bronze sword in Texas, and a possible Asiatic origin of the Na-Dene (Navajo-related) languages.

### Forthcoming publications

*Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, edited by John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, combines the FARMS Research Updates of the 1990s with similarly concise research notes from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, much as *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* did at the beginning of the 1990s in presenting the FARMS Research Updates of the 1980s. The result is a handy collection of insightful studies that will help readers better understand and appreciate many interesting aspects of the Book of Mormon. Available in August.

*King Benjamin's Speech Made Simple*, edited by John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, is a popular abridgment of the expansive volume *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* published by FARMS in 1998. Prepared now with the general reader in mind, this streamlined version presents the essential contents of the original volume. In 11 stimulating studies, the authors examine Benjamin's classic speech from many fascinating angles. Available in August.

*Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching*, first bound edition, by John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, improves previous charts and graphs visually, more than doubles their number, and adds explanations of them. This collection of more than 175 visual aids includes maps, diagrams, chronologies, flowcharts, tables, bar graphs, pie charts, and many other effective schematics on Book of Mormon topics such as the history and structure of the record, Jesus Christ, religion, law, culture, war, and geography. Available in August.

Annual FARMS Banquet  
5 November 1999  
Speaker: Truman G. Madsen

Watch for further details

# INSIGHTS

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

Published by the  
**Foundation for  
Ancient Research  
and Mormon Studies**  
P.O. Box 7113, University Station  
Provo, Utah 84602  
1-800-327-6715

### Board of Trustees

Daniel C. Peterson, Chairman  
Daniel Oswald, Executive Director  
Douglas M. Chabries  
Bruce L. Christensen  
John E. Clark  
Robert L. Millet  
Donald W. Parry  
Noel B. Reynolds  
Michael D. Rhodes  
Stephen D. Ricks  
David R. Seely  
John W. Welch

### The Purpose of FARMS

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.

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

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.