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# Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD

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## FARMS Publishes First Two Volumes of Groundbreaking Book of Mormon Project

The long wait has been worth it. FARMS is pleased to announce the publication of the first two volumes of a project that promises to be a boon to Book of Mormon textual studies and related research. Prepared by Royal Skousen, professor of English and linguistics at Brigham Young University, these volumes contain typographical facsimiles of the original and printer's manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. Later volumes, which will be available in the next three years, will include a history of the text of the Book of Mormon, an analysis of textual variants in the book, and a complete electronic collation of the two manuscripts and 20 different printed versions of the Book of Mormon.

This monumental project, which began in 1988, has two main goals. The first is to determine, to the extent possible, the original English-language text of the book—that is, the text that Joseph Smith received by means of the interpreters or the seer stone. The second purpose is to establish the history of the wording of the text, including both accidental errors and editorial changes that the book has undergone as it has been transmitted down through time in its many editions.

Initially, this project focused primarily on the two manuscripts of the Book of Mormon: the

original manuscript and the printer's manuscript. The original manuscript was produced in the spring and early summer of 1829 by scribes who wrote down the Prophet Joseph Smith's dictation of the text. In 1841 it was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House in Nauvoo, Illinois, where it remained until 1882. By that time, however, most of the manuscript had been destroyed by mold and water seepage. The surviving fragments, which represent 28 percent of the original text, are now mostly in the historical archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The printer's manuscript was copied from the original manuscript between August 1829 and the early months of 1830.

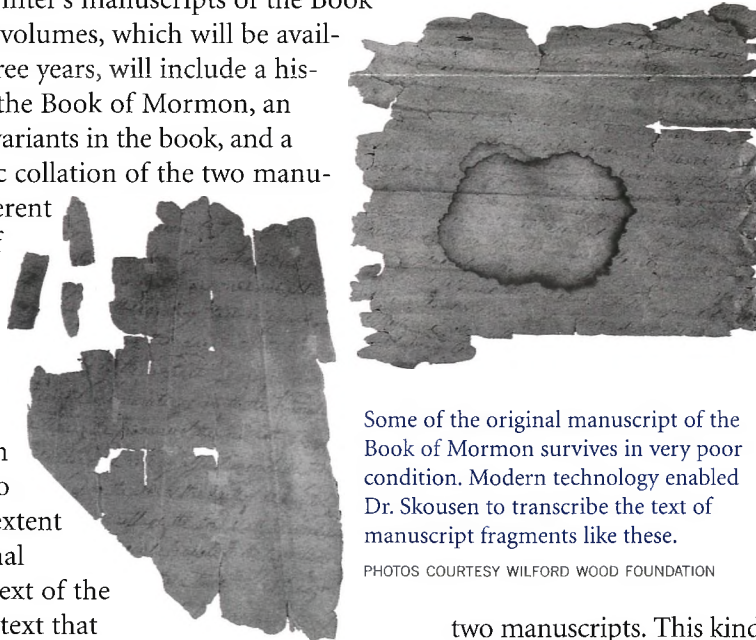
The printer used this manuscript to typeset most of the Book of Mormon, although the section from Helaman 13 through Mormon 9 was typeset from the original manuscript. The printer's manuscript is virtually complete and is held by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Independence, Missouri.

The first two volumes in the series contain typographical facsimiles of the

two manuscripts. This kind of transcription is an exact reproduction of the text in typescript, including original spellings, miswritings, cross-outs, overwritings, erasures, and scribal insertions. The books also include color and black-and-white ultraviolet photographs of some of the manuscript pages and fragments.

The third volume in the series will be a history of the text of the Book of Mormon. It will discuss the transmission of the text, from the two manuscripts

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Some of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon survives in very poor condition. Modern technology enabled Dr. Skousen to transcribe the text of manuscript fragments like these.

PHOTOS COURTESY WILFORD WOOD FOUNDATION

## Jacob and Enos: Wrestling before God

Enos, one of the scribes who kept the small plates of Nephi, was the son of Nephi's brother Jacob. In his record Enos appears to allude to the ancestor after whom his father was named: Jacob, who was renamed Israel by "a man" with whom he wrestled all night (Genesis 32:24–28). Enos may have had this event in mind when he wrote of "the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins" (Enos 1:2).

When Enos wrote about his wrestling, he evidently was referring not only to his struggle to overcome sin but also to his prayers for both the Lamanites and the Nephites (see verses 9–18). He wrote of "struggling in the spirit" while praying for his own people (verse 10) and noted that he "prayed unto [God] with many long strugglings, for [his] brethren, the Lamanites" (verse 11). Similar terminology is found in Alma 8:10, where we read that "Alma labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer, that he would pour out his Spirit upon the people who were in the city; that he would also grant that he might baptize them unto repentance." These two examples suggest that wrestling with God can refer to prayer in behalf of those who have fallen away from the truth.

In similar fashion, Jacob may have been praying for his brother Esau during his wrestle with the angel. At the time, Jacob was re-

turning to his homeland after a sojourn of two decades in the land of Syria. He had left on bad terms with Esau, who wanted to kill him (Genesis 27:41–45). Now, in the midst of his efforts to placate Esau with gifts, Jacob prayed that God would deliver him and his family from his brother (Genesis 32:9–12).

The Nephites and Lamanites for whom Enos prayed were very much like Jacob and Esau. Nephi, like Jacob, had to flee with his family because his elder brothers Laman and Lemuel sought to kill him (2 Nephi 5:1–7). Nephi's people were settled and industrious, constructing a temple and other buildings (2 Nephi 5:15–17), while the Lamanites became "an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety, and did seek in the wilderness for beasts of prey" (2 Nephi 5:24). Enos later described the Lamanites as "wild and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax" (Enos 1:20) and noted that they sought to destroy the Nephites (Enos 1:14).

Similarly, the Bible describes Esau as "a cunning hunter, a man of the field" (Genesis 25:26), who loved to hunt with the bow (Genesis 27:1–5). Before God

forgave his sins, Enos "went to hunt beasts in the forests," where he remembered the words of his father, which prompted him to seek God's forgiveness (Enos 1:3–4). By describing himself as a hunter, Enos may have been comparing his preconversion self to the Lamanites and to Esau.

Additional evidence suggesting that Enos had his ancestor Jacob in mind is found in his words "I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God" (Enos 1:2). In Hebrew the words *before God* would be *liphney ʾel*, literally "to the face of God." The name of the place where Jacob wrestled all night, Peniel, is from the same Hebrew phrase. "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Genesis 32:30).

After his wrestle with God, Enos expressed the hope that, at the resurrection, he would "stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure" (Enos 1:27). This passage is also reminiscent of Jacob's reunion and reconciliation with his brother Esau the day after his nightlong wrestle. Jacob said to his brother, "I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me" (Genesis 33:10). Just as Esau was "pleased" when Jacob saw his face, Enos hoped to see the face of God "with pleasure."

Enos noted that the Lamanites wanted to destroy the records of the Nephites (Enos 1:14). Evidently this was because these rec-

ords gave validity to various Nephite claims, including the right to possess the land that God had given them (see Enos 1:10). Some noncanonical Jewish texts reflect a similar tale of the dispute between Jacob and Esau. *Jasher* 27:12–14 recounts Jacob’s purchase of the birthright in exchange for the pottage and notes that “Jacob wrote the whole of this in a book, and he testified the same with witnesses, and he sealed it, and the book remained in the hands of Jacob.” Later, after returning from Syria, Jacob wrote a “book of purchase” for the property agreement he struck with Esau after Isaac died.<sup>1</sup> He put it with “the command and the statutes and the revealed book, and he placed them in an earthen vessel in order that they should remain for a long time, and he delivered them into the hands of his children” (*Jasher* 47:26–29). When Esau’s family challenged the right of Jacob’s sons to bury their father in the cave, the Israel-

ites produced “all the records; the record of the purchase, the sealed record and the open record, and also all the first records in which all the transactions of the birthright are written” (*Jasher* 56:55–57).<sup>2</sup>

Enos prayed that God would preserve the Nephite records (Enos 1:13, 15–16), and they were eventually buried in the ground in a stone box by Moroni, who delivered them to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Enos’s use of the term *preserve* may reflect the words of Jacob following his nightlong wrestling, in which he said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30).

The subtlety of Enos’s allusion to his ancestor Jacob and the way he seems to compare the situation of the Nephites and Lamanites with that of Jacob and Esau suggests an acute awareness of the scriptural account. It may also reflect additional material found on the brass plates of

Laban and represented in early Jewish tradition. Such subtlety, we suggest, would not be expected from an uneducated farm boy such as Joseph Smith, who dictated the entire Book of Mormon in approximately 60 days. Consequently, we see these allusions to the biblical account as further evidence for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and another example of the complexity of this masterpiece of literature. ❏

#### Notes

1. Jacob’s purchase of the rights to the cave of Machpelah from Esau is mentioned by Rashi on Genesis 46:6, citing *Midrash Tanhuma*. According to *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* 36, a deed was drawn up for Abraham’s purchase of that cave as a burial place.
2. This story is also found in TB *Sotah* 16a, *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer* 39, and Rashi on Genesis 49:21.

**By John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper**

#### BROWN BAG REPORT

### Early Traditions about Abraham

On 7 February 2001 Brian Hauglid and John Tvedtnes discussed their work of comparing early Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and other traditions about Abraham with the accounts of Abraham in the Bible and in the Book of Abraham. Their efforts are part of a larger project on the Book of Abraham that will result in several FARMS publications. One is a compendium of more than 120 early Abrahamic traditions culled from extrabiblical sources that contain elements found in the Book of Abraham but missing from the Genesis account. This volume, edited by Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and John Gee, is completed and will be available early this summer. A related volume by Tvedtnes and Hauglid will detail narrative elements of the Book of Abraham miss-

ing from the Bible but corroborated by other ancient texts.

Hauglid, an assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU, noted that the Book of Abraham is supported by many extrabiblical sources and that its simple, unembellished narrative suggests its authenticity as a “textus receptus,” or the text upon which later traditions were built. For example, one tradition describes how Abraham escaped after being bound and cast into a fire. According to Hauglid, the introduction of fire into the otherwise familiar story may have resulted from a mistranslation of an earlier text and is an example of narrative expansion by later exegetes.

He also argued that a methodology for evaluating narrative expansion, such as the one that James  
continued on page 6

## New *FARMS Review of Books* Promotes Faithful Scholarship

Skeptics and critics often chide members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for beliefs that run counter to secular histories and theories crafted by the scholars of the world. Scholars within the church respond with reasoning and research that support a more faithful view. Daniel C. Peterson writes in his introduction to the latest issue of the *FARMS Review of Books* that those who “wish to contend that . . . Mormonism is merely a rather haphazard pastiche of American frontier nostrums, a bit of folk magic, and a few half-understood chunks of popular theology . . . face an increasingly difficult task.” His comments emphatically punctuate the theme that runs through the remarks of all the reviewers: that a faithful version of Latter-day Saint history and theology is not off the mark.

This issue of the *Review of Books* responds to two works about Fawn M. Brodie, another book that outlines parallels in ancient texts to the story of the gold plates, a book that finds evidence for Latter-day Saint theology in God’s creations, a doctoral dissertation that treats the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price as poetry, and a book that is critical of the church and its doctrines. This issue also includes indexes by author, review, and title reviewed for the year 2000.

Louis C. Midgley first reviews a new biography of controversial historian Fawn Brodie by Newel G. Bringhurst. Midgley writes that Bringhurst’s controlling bias is obvious: although he interviews family and friends of Brodie, he does not take her critics into account. Even so, Midgley explains, “if we ignore his appeal to objectivity, . . . we find that

he does seem to have been both sensitive and quite comprehensive in his treatment of Brodie.” Midgley also praises Bringhurst for not making Brodie’s mistakes of delving into psychoanalysis and using “literary embellishment.”

Nevertheless, Midgley argues that Bringhurst’s book is not critically sound. In addition to his significant bias, Bringhurst does not address the question of how well Brodie understood the Book of Mormon, something he could have done by looking at her marginal notes in her marked copy of the book. And although Bringhurst wants to understand why Brodie argued with so many other schol-

ars, he fails to examine “how well she formulated arguments [or] found ways to test theories.” Midgley also discusses Bringhurst’s failure to deal adequately with the many reviews of Brodie’s books. In the end, says Midgley, Bringhurst’s attempt to “shore up [Brodie’s] slumping reputation” backfires because he

has “not been able to fashion a portrait of one able to take the measure of Joseph Smith.”

Midgley next responds to “A Hard Day for Professor Midgley: An Essay for Fawn McKay Brodie.” At the beginning of this review, Midgley gives a synopsis of the conversation that revisionist Mormon historians and he have carried on for the past 20 years. He points out the fatal flaw in revisionist history: the revisionists do not read the Book of Mormon in an attempt to discover if its messages are true but instead “insist that the veracity of that text be proven to the satisfaction of gentile skeptics.”

In his review of John A. Tvedtnes’s *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: “Out of Darkness unto Light,”* Kevin Barney demonstrates the need for this book by referring to a recent article by a careless scholar who, in attempting to rebut some of Hugh Nibley’s comments about ancient metal documents, displays his own ignorance of the subject. Barney explains that if this man, who holds a

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“Those who wish to contend that Mormonism is merely a rather haphazard pastiche of American frontier nostrums, a bit of folk magic, and a few half-understood chunks of popular theology face an increasingly difficult task.”

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Ph.D., “is so ill informed on the subject of ancient writing on metallic plates, how much more likely [it is] that the average lay person has not even the first clue as to the nature of this ancient practice.”

Barney goes on to praise Tvedtnes for the breadth of his study, which covers not just metal documents but also other elements of the account of the Book of Mormon plates that are consistent with what is known from ancient times, such as sealed books, records hidden in boxes, angels as guardians of sacred books, and books kept in treasuries. The book contains “extensive information” and “significant insights,” writes Barney, who urges “every student of the Book of Mormon, from those with serious research interests to the more casual reader, [to] obtain and read this excellent study.”


A book on evidences for Latter-day Saint theology, *Fingerprints of God: Evidences from Near-Death*

*Studies, Scientific Research on Creation, and Mormon Theology*, by Arvin S. Gibson, also received three short reviews. As two of the reviewers point out, Gibson’s thesis is essentially Alma’s response to Korihor that “all things denote there is a God” (Alma 30:44), and Gibson uses many areas of science and research on near-death experiences (NDEs) to prove his point.

The reviewers find this book flawed in its statistical analyses; they also question some of Gibson’s scientific understanding. Gibson relies heavily on NDEs to bridge the gap between science and religion, and all the reviewers question his confidence in experiences that as yet cannot be tested or measured scientifically. Gibson also overstates his case, claiming that NDEs and associated “scientific” evidence constitute absolute proof rather than merely suggest possible indications of the truth.

However, all three reviewers write they were intrigued by the NDEs described and by the questions they found themselves asking as they read the book. Reviewer Kevin Livingstone perhaps states the dilemma posed by this book best: “While the author and I share the same religion and core set of beliefs—that God exists, that God created the universe and life, that we all existed before this life and will continue our existence after death—our interpretation differs for much of the evidence presented.”

In reviewing a dissertation titled “Poetic Language in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” James E. Faulconer gives it poor marks as a dissertation but points out that the flaws are probably largely the fault of poor feedback from the dissertation committee. He comments that while the candidate was perhaps sympathetic to members of the church and wanted to avoid the question of the historicity of the Book of Mormon, her bias against a faithful version of church history was evident. Responding to James R. White’s *Is the Mormon My Brother?* L. Ara Norwood makes a lengthy rebuttal to White’s flawed understanding of the doctrine of *theosis* (the idea that humans can become gods) and explains that White has misrepresented Latter-day Saint beliefs on the subject and misunderstood what the early church fathers had to say about it.

To obtain a copy of the new *Review*, see the enclosed order form or visit the FARMS Web site at [farms.byu.edu](http://farms.byu.edu). 


### New Associate Director of Publications

The BYU Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts has a new associate director of publications. Don L. Brugger will assist publications director Alison V. P. Coutts in overseeing an increasing number of publishing projects and handling other departmental matters. He will continue as managing editor of FARMS’s *Insights* newsletter, production editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* and other publications, and leader of an editorial team.

Since 1977 Don has gained publishing experience through editorial work at the *Los Angeles Times*, Deseret Book, the *Ensign* magazine, and FARMS. Complementing that experience is his study of English and journalism (he received a B.S. degree in English from Utah State University and an M.A. in American literature from BYU). Don is pleased to be able to keep his hand in editing projects and to continue working with his fellow “crackerjack” editors while assuming new administrative responsibilities.

## Traditions continued from page 3

Kugel develops and tests in his book *In Potiphar's House*, can provide a starting point for Latter-day Saint scholars interested in analyzing scriptural and extra-biblical parallels. A methodology of this type (which involves examining simultaneous versing in parallel accounts and seeing how narrative motifs "travel" and become harmonized with other motifs) could aid in tracing narrative parallels to possible origins and determining their antiquity and credibility.

Tvedtnes, associate director of research at FARMS, shared examples of ancient traditions that support nonbiblical aspects of the Book of Abraham account. For example, while the Bible does not mention a famine in Ur of the Chaldees (Abraham's homeland), a number of early Jewish and Muslim texts do, thereby corroborating Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1. Tvedtnes also noted that recent scientific investigations, such as archaeological excavations and sediment samplings from the ocean floor, confirm that there was a drought during Abraham's time in a large region that included his homeland. Another striking example of extra-biblical support for the Book of Abraham account is the many early sources that say Abraham wrote about astronomy—a detail absent from the Bible. 

## Book of Mormon Project


continued from page 1

and the first printing in 1830 through 13 subsequent LDS editions as well as the 1858 Wright edition and 5 RLDS editions.

The fourth volume will discuss cases of textual variance and will attempt to determine the original reading from the earliest sources. A complete scholarly analysis of the text of the Book of Mormon has not been done before, although FARMS published a preliminary study from 1984 through 1986.

The fifth volume will not be a printed book. Rather, it will be an electronic collation of each textual variant in the Book of Mormon, including punctuation. It will include the readings of the two manuscripts lined up side by side with the readings of the 20 published versions mentioned above.

This groundbreaking project represents years of painstaking, meticulous work that will be a tremendous resource for Book of Mormon scholars, historians, teachers, and students.

For purchasing information, see the enclosed order form or visit the catalog section of the FARMS Web site at [farms.byu.edu](http://farms.byu.edu). 

The Newsletter of the Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies (FARMS) at Brigham Young University

# Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOL. 21, NO. 5 | 2001

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### 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.

FARMS is part of the Brigham Young University Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. 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.

FARMS 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 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.

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|-------------|---|----------|------------|-------------|
| OM-01       | <i>The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon</i> , Royal Skousen, ed., 2001, 553 pp., hardbound. Retail <del>\$59.95</del>            |          | \$47.95    |             |
| OP-01       | <i>The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon</i> , 2 vols., Royal Skousen, ed., 2001, 979 pp., hardbound. Retail <del>\$119.95</del> |          | \$95.95    |             |
| R-01A       | <i>FARMS Review of Books</i> , vol. 13, no. 1, 2001, 192 pp.  |          | \$8.95     |             |

### New Items (see flyer)

|       |   |  |         |  |
|-------|---|--|---------|--|
| N-MA3 | <i>Beginnings: Creation to Abraham</i> , vol. 1, Hugh W. Nibley, 2001, read by Lloyd D. Newell, 4 audiotapes, 210 min. Retail <del>\$4.95</del> |  | \$11.95 |  |
| N-MA4 | <i>Beginnings: Adam to Moses</i> , vol. 2, Hugh W. Nibley, 2001, 4 audiotapes, 230 min. Retail <del>\$4.95</del>                                |  | \$11.95 |  |

### Summer Reading List Specials (while supplies last)

|         |   |  |         |  |
|---------|---|--|---------|--|
| S&C-00  | <i>The New World Figurine Project</i> , vol. 2, Terry Stocker and Cynthia L. Otis Charlton, eds., 288 pp. Retail <del>\$39.95</del>   |  | \$31.95 |  |
| GIL-93  | <i>Of All Things! Classic Quotations of Hugh W. Nibley</i> , Gary P. Gillum, ed., 306 pp. Retail <del>\$15.95</del>   |  | \$7.95  |  |
| N-08    | <i>The Prophetic Book of Mormon</i> , Hugh W. Nibley, 1989, 606 pp. Retail <del>\$26.95</del>   |  | \$9.95  |  |
| BLA-96  | <i>Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars</i> , Susan Easton Black, 1996, 250 pp. Retail <del>\$15.95</del>   |  | \$4.95  |  |
| P&W-98  | <i>Isaiah in the Book of Mormon</i> , Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds., 1998, 558 pp., hardbound. Retail <del>\$24.95</del>  |  | \$14.95 |  |
| CHR-00  | <i>Popol Vuh: The Mythic Sections—Tales of First Beginnings from the Ancient K'iche'-Maya</i> , Allen J. Christenson, 2000, 298 pp. Retail <del>\$19.95</del>                 |  | \$14.95 |  |
| F-V7    | "And I Saw the Stars," Daniel C. Peterson, William J. Hamblin, and John Gee; "Facsimile 3 and the Book of the Dead 125" John Gee, videotape, 40 min. Retail <del>\$9.95</del> |  | \$7.95  |  |
| FAU-99A | <i>Romans 1: Notes and Reflections</i> , James E. Faulconer, 144 pp., softbound. Retail <del>\$14.95</del>  |  | \$9.95  |  |

### Monthly Specials

|           |  |  |         |  |
|-----------|--|--|---------|--|
| SPEC-NMA2 | <i>Beginnings</i> , vols. 1 & 2, Hugh W. Nibley, 8 audiotapes, 440 min. Retail <del>\$29.90</del>    |  | \$20.00 |  |
| SPEC-EPO  | <i>Prophetic Book of Mormon, Expressions of Faith, and Of All Things</i> . Retail <del>\$58.95</del> |  | \$20.00 |  |

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The Foundation for Ancient Research  
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