



# Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

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## Full Issue

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# INSIGHTS

The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

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Volume 29  
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## Book of Mormon Critical Text Project Completes Text Analysis

The Maxwell Institute and Brigham Young University are pleased to announce the publication of part 6 of volume 4 of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*. Part 6 analyzes the text from 3 Nephi 19 through Moroni 10.

Royal Skousen, an internationally known professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, has been the editor of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project since 1988.

This last part of volume 4 of the critical text of the Book of Mormon completes the basic textual analysis of the Book of Mormon. There is also an addenda section at the end of this part (covering almost 100 pages) that treats a number of additional conjectures to the text and, in a few cases, revises the analysis for several items already discussed in volume 4.

Now that part 6 is published, it is possible to reconstruct the “historical text of the Book of Mormon” — that is, the earliest text, including conjectural changes based on evidence from usage and scribal practice elsewhere in the text. Basically, the historical text is the original English-language text, to the extent that it can be determined by scholarly means.

Skousen’s work has garnered praise from scholars familiar with Book of Mormon studies. Grant Hardy, professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and editor of *The Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition*, describes Skousen and his project: “Skousen is a scholar’s scholar. He examines everything, his arguments are meticulously reasoned, he uses all the available resources of modern academia, he is generous (often giving credit to students who came up with possible readings), he always gives full consideration to alternative explanations and inconvenient evidence, and he seems willing to go wherever the evidence leads. . . . As a historian who has spent his professional life working with critical editions of ancient texts, my response to Skousen’s book is awe and humility.”<sup>1</sup>

Terryl L. Givens, professor of literature and religion at the University of Richmond and author of *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion*, says of one analysis in Skousen’s work: “This strikes me as more than just careful editorial work. This is a brilliantly fashioned argument that is carefully reasoned, meticulously argued, and reliant upon the best kind of intellectual effort: because he gives both readings the full benefit of the doubt, conceives hypotheses that substantiate both readings, and scours the text for corroborating evidence. And he repeats this procedure hundreds of times.”<sup>2</sup>

Skousen is currently working on volumes 3 and 5 of the Book of Mormon Critical Text Project. Volume 3 will describe in detail the history of the text of the Book of Mormon, including the editing of the text into standard English, and will also provide a description of the original English-language text of the book. Volume 5 will feature a computerized collation of the two Book of Mormon manuscripts (the original manuscript and the printer’s manuscript) and 20 printed editions from 1830 to 1981. Volumes 3 and 5 are slated to appear in 2011 or 2012.

Part 6 of *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* is available from the BYU Bookstore. ♦

### Notes

1. Grant Hardy, “Scholarship for the Ages,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/1 (2006): 48.
2. Terryl L. Givens, “The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/1 (2006): 35.

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**Editor’s Note:** The Maxwell Institute invited Professor Royal Skousen to describe part 6 of volume 4.

### Changes in the Text

The most important part of the critical text project is to analyze the textual variation in the text of the Book of Mormon and to recover the original text, to the extent possible. Here are four of the more significant cases of textual variation that are discussed in part 6:

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■ Mormon 8:28

yea it shall come in a day  
when the power of God shall be denied  
and churches become defiled  
and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts  
yea even in a day  
**when leaders of churches and teachers**  
**in the pride of their hearts**  
even to the envying of them  
who belong to their churches

There seems to be a missing predicate here for the phrase “yea even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers in the pride of their hearts”. German Ellsworth, the Northern States Mission president at the turn of the last century, in his later editing (in 1907) of the 1905 LDS missionary edition, tried to deal with the apparent ellipsis here by supplying the words *shall rise*, thus “yea even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers **shall rise** in the pride of their hearts”. The current LDS text has maintained Ellsworth’s emendation. But internal evidence suggests that the missing words were *shall be lifted up*, thus “yea even in a day when leaders of churches and teachers **shall be lifted up** in the pride of their hearts”. Note, in particular, the preceding language in this verse: “and churches become defiled and **shall be lifted up** in the pride of their hearts”. The ellipted “shall be lifted up” is also supported by numerous occurrences of this phraseology elsewhere in the Book of Mormon text.

■ Ether 1:11–12

and Seth was the son of **Shiblon**  
and **Shiblon** was the son of Com

This is the only name listed in the genealogy at the beginning of the book of Ether that takes a different form later on in that book; namely, in Ether 11 the form of the name is *Shiblon* rather than *Shiblon*. Scribal evidence suggests that *Shiblon* was probably the original name of the Jaredite king in the book of Ether; it was written correctly in Ether 1, but later on in Ether 11 was incorrectly written as *Shiblon*. The probable source of the error was a tendency to produce a labial *m* after pronouncing the labial *b*. In the original manuscript for Alma 38:5, when Oliver Cowdery wrote down the name for the son of Alma, he initially wrote *Shiblon*,

then erased the final *m* and wrote *n*. This scribal error provides support for an error tendency towards *Shiblon*.

■ Ether 1:41

go to and gather together thy flocks  
— both male and female — of every kind  
and also of the seed of the earth of every kind  
and thy **family**  
and also Jared thy brother and his **family**  
and also thy friends and their **families**  
and the friends of Jared and their **families**

In this verse, the printer’s manuscript has the singular *family* when the reference is to an individual (thus the brother of Jared and his family as well as Jared and his family), but the plural *families* when the text refers to the brother of Jared’s friends and to Jared’s friends. In other words, each individual has one family. Unfortunately, the 1830 typesetter accidentally set *families* when referring to the family of the brother of Jared, probably because his eye caught the plural *families* in the next manuscript line (“& also thy friends & their **families**”). There is clearly no intent in the original text to assign more than one family to the brother of Jared; the singular reading of the original text should be restored here, even though the plural reading has caused some controversy, especially during the early 1900s.

■ Moroni 10:33

then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God  
through the shedding of the blood of Christ  
which is in the covenant of the Father  
unto the remission of your sins  
that ye become **holy without spot**

The printer’s manuscript here reads “holy without spot”. All editions have kept the spelling *holy*, but one wonders if Joseph Smith didn’t actually dictate *wholly*. There would have been no difference in pronunciation, nor much motivation for the scribe to have asked which word was intended. In other words, we have two possible readings here:

... that ye become **holy**, without spot

... that ye become **wholly** without spot



This possible emendation of *wholly* in place of *holy* was first suggested in 1991 by one of my students, Kevin Quinn. Later, in 1994 a thorough analysis of this passage was made by another student, Brent Johnson. The committee for the 1920 LDS edition, apparently aware of the potential problem here in Moroni 10:33, decided to place a comma after *holy*, thus guaranteeing the first reading. In his analysis, Johnson suggested a third reading, one that involves inserting an *and*:

... that ye become **holy and** without spot

Ultimately, usage in the New Testament argues that in Moroni 10:33 the word *holy* is correct: “but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). It should be noted, however, that this biblical passage supports the third possibility of having an *and* between *holy* and *without spot*.

### Vocabulary from Early Modern English

One of the important findings of the critical text project has been the use in the original text of vocabulary from the 1500s and 1600s—and not just vocabulary that can be found in the King James Bible. Here are a couple of examples of archaic vocabulary that are discussed in part 6 of volume 4:

- 3 Nephi 26:3  
even until the elements should melt with fervent heat  
and the earth should be **wrapped** together as a scroll  
and the heavens and the earth should pass away

Usage elsewhere in Book of Mormon suggests that the verb here could be *rolled* rather than *wrapped*, as in Mormon 5:23 (“and at his great command the earth shall be **rolled** together as a scroll”) and in Mormon 9:2 (“yea even that great day when the earth shall be rolled together as a scroll”). Yet the Oxford English Dictionary (under definition 9 for the verb *wrap*) indicates that one meaning for the verb *wrap* is ‘to wind or fold up or together . . . to roll or gather up’; thus the phrase “wrap together” in 3 Nephi 26:3 can be considered equivalent to “roll together”. In fact, the OED cites the following biblical passage in support of this usage (here given in the King James version): “and Elijah took

his mantle and wrapped *it* together and smote the waters” (2 Kings 2:8). The OED also provides a citation that refers to both heaven and earth as being wrapped up (here cited with modern spelling):

William Watreman (1555)

the beginner of things visible wrapped up  
both heaven and earth . . . together in one pattern

Thus the reference in the Book of Mormon to the earth being wrapped up as a scroll is fully acceptable.

- Moroni 10:26  
and woe unto them  
which shall **do these things away** and die  
for they die in their sins  
and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God

The phrase “do these things away” seems very odd to modern readers, but in Early Modern English this phrase meant ‘to put away, dismiss’. This meaning is listed under definition 44 for the verb *do* in the Oxford English Dictionary. The last quotation cited in the OED with this meaning comes from Edmund Spenser in 1596: “Do fear away and tell”. Earlier in verse 24, Moroni once more uses this phraseology: “if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be **done away** among you / it shall be because of unbelief”.

### Statistical Summary for Part 6

Part 6 has 630 pages of text and covers the last 16 percent of the Book of Mormon text. Out of 806 cases of variation (or potential variation) that are analyzed, there are 304 differences between the critical text and the standard text. Moreover, 52 readings have never appeared in any standard printed edition: one is in the original manuscript only, another in both the original manuscript and the printer’s manuscript, 27 in the printer’s manuscript only (in these cases the original manuscript is not extant), and 23 are conjectured readings. In addition, 47 readings make a difference that would show up in any translation, 18 make the Book of Mormon text more consistent in phraseology or usage, and four restore a unique phrase or word choice to the text. ♦

## Rising Scholars Mentored through Summer Seminar

A select group of graduate and advanced undergraduate students participated in a seminar on Mormon thought at BYU this past May and June. The participants' papers presented at a public symposium on June 25 will be published in the near future.

Under the auspices of the Maxwell Institute, the seminar was conducted by Terryl Givens, Professor of Literature and Religion at the University of Richmond, and Matthew Grow, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Southern Indiana. Richard Bushman, Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies in the School of Religion at Claremont Graduate University oversaw the seminar.

The purpose of the seminar was to investigate the influence of Parley and Orson Pratt on the 19th-century Mormon thought. The Pratts were two of the most important figures in developing, systematizing, and promulgating the doctrines of early Mormonism. The eight graduate students in the seminar explored the theological, intellectual, and cultural contexts behind the Pratts' work and weighed its influence on Mormonism today. The seminar continued the tradition of the series of seminars on Joseph Smith begun by Bushman in the summer of 1997.

The fellows selected in this year's competition came from universities in the United States, Brazil, and Scotland. The Maxwell Institute mentors young scholars who are advancing in fields related to the

work and mission of the Institute. The summer seminar gives the next generation of scholars the benefit of mentoring by leading Mormon scholars who publish in the field of Mormon studies, such as Givens, Grow, and Bushman.

Recent events such as Mitt Romney's campaign for president of the United States and the PBS special "The Mormons," as well as the publication of Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, have focused national and international attention on Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Preceding the publication of *Rough Stone Rolling*, and contributing to it, were six summer seminars funded privately by a small group of individuals sympathetic to scholarly ventures. The seminars involved 40 advanced undergraduate and graduate students who, under Bushman's direction, built the *Archive of Restoration Culture* (BYU Studies 45/4 contains an article by Bushman describing the Archive project).

To support such programs, the Mormon Scholars Foundation was established in 2007. The Foundation, directed by Bushman, Givens, and Andrew Skinner (Professor of Ancient Scripture at BYU and former executive director of the Maxwell Institute), organizes and funds conferences and seminars in collaboration with other organizations such as the Maxwell Institute. Past topics for the summer seminars have included "Joseph Smith and His Critics," in 2008, and "Mormon Thinkers, 1890–1930," in 2007. Information about future summer seminars will be made available through the Maxwell Institute. ♦



### From Elder Neal A. Maxwell

We need to make allowance for the role of irony in our individual lives and as a people. For instance, those chosen for service by the Lord would appear to be improbable selections. The same God who had his Only Begotten Son born in a manger and reared in despised Nazareth as the least appreciated but most beneficial individual in human history, also improbably

chose Moses, who was not eloquent but "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue," to lead one of the greatest migrations in history. God also chose shepherds and fishermen, sent a mere boy to face Goliath, chose Paul (a persecutor of Christians) as an apostle, and selected an obscure boy to receive the remarkable divine manifestations at Palmyra. (*A Time to Choose* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975], 43–44, as quoted in *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory H. Maxwell [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 172.)



## Of Scorpions, Vipers, and the Assassin's Drug

Twelfth-century Cairo was a vibrant place. The legendary Saladin, who had recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187, had established himself there and was actively transforming it from a royal resort into a cosmopolitan center of power, commerce, learning, and culture. A pious Muslim, Saladin chose for his physician at court a Jew who had been twice exiled—first from his hometown of Cordoba, Spain (Andalusia), and then again from Fez, Morocco (al-Maghreb)—by the fanatical Almohad regime of Northwest Africa.

Under the patronage of the famous sultan, Maimonides, in addition to practicing medicine at court and among his own clientele, led a Jewish congregation as their rabbi, and wrote and taught on a variety of subjects. His philosophical and religious treatises, including his interpretation of the Torah and his famous *Guide for the Perplexed* are classics that are widely read and studied to this day. Lesser known are the medical treatises he wrote; but these too hold an interest for those today seeking glimpses into the past.

The medical works of Maimonides are a window into the world of premodern medicine,

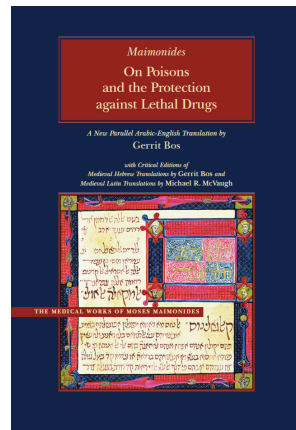
describing the physical ailments not only of kings and rulers but also of common folk from every walk of life. The various diagnoses, remedies, and procedures Maimonides details connect him to a medical tradition that reaches as far back as the Greek physician Galen (d. 216) and continues right into the early modern period—centuries during

which the basic models and methods of medicine changed very little. These were the days of humors black, white, red, and yellow; of vapors and elixirs; of leeching and bloodletting; of methods variously benign and barbaric. Some of what Maimonides prescribed seems little different from the herbal or therapeutic remedies used by many today; others, thankfully, have long since been abandoned.

When the sultan's counselor, al-Fā'il, requested a summary from Maimonides of preventatives and remedies that laypersons could consult in order to overcome the effects of various toxins without having to resort to (and wait on) a physician, Maimonides obliged with a treatise he subtitled *On Poisons and the Protection against Lethal Drugs*. Writing in Arabic, the language of learning in his day, Maimonides divided his work into two parts: the first deals with the treatment of various animal bites, including scorpions, bees and wasps, serpents, mad dogs and domesticated ones; the second deals with the treatment of ingested poisons, with particular interest in poisons used by assassins. It might not come as a surprise that the ruling elites were interested in such matters, but why would they be concerned to make such information available to the public at large? An earthy excerpt from the second part of the book seems laden with inference on this question. Maimonides writes:

We find that some men are assassinated by [their] women by means of the food [they take] and die after one day or some days, or suffer from what is far worse than death, namely suppurating elephantiasis, which results in the limbs falling off.

In every city I passed through I have seen some men suffer from [this illness]. And what I and others have heard about it is too much to be summed up [here]. Those senior physicians whom I met told me in their own name and that of their teachers that they had looked into this matter thoroughly and carefully until they learned from those adulterous women



Gerrit Bos near the statue of Maimonides in Cordoba, Spain.  
Photograph by D. Morgan Davis.



themselves what [substance] they had used to assassinate so-and-so, and their stories are well known. (*On Poisons* 2.4.83–84)

Such details collapse the centuries that separate us from Maimonides and allow us a glimpse, however mean, into the lives of the common people of his time. It seems that marriage could be a fraught enterprise in the Middle Ages, too!

*Maimonides: On Poisons and the Protection against Lethal Drugs* is the latest title to be released in The Medical Works of Moses Maimonides, a series of primary texts and translations prepared by Gerrit Bos at the University of Cologne and published under the auspices of the Maxwell Institute's

Middle Eastern Texts Initiative. This volume also features the scholarly work of Michael R. McVaugh of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, who has edited the Latin translations of *On Poisons* that were made in the centuries after Maimonides by Europeans seeking to preserve his knowledge for their own time. Angela Barrionuevo oversaw the production editing of this volume at the Maxwell Institute. The book will carry the Brigham Young University Press imprint and will be distributed by the University of Chicago Press. ♦

By D. Morgan Davis

Associate Director, Middle Eastern Texts Initiative

## Preview of Forthcoming FARMS Review

Readers awaiting this year's first number of the *FARMS Review* (vol. 21, no. 1) will be rewarded with a deep lineup of reviews and other essays on the Book of Mormon. Sure to heighten anticipation is a promised peek at Terryl Givens's in-press volume from Oxford University Press: *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction*. Chapter 2, "Themes," will be featured in its entirety—a substantial excerpt from the 152-page work that will fill an important gap in Oxford's popular Very Short Introduction series. *Review* readers will enjoy other Book of Mormon-related fare as well: a literary interpretation of the death of Laban; a debunking of myths about the miraculous printing of the 1830 edition; a look at the record's literary sophistication in light of a biblical hermeneutic that grants legitimacy to repetition and allusion; and reviews of the seminal works *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon*, by

John W. Welch, and the six-volume *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, by Brant A. Gardner.

In the area of biblical studies are two responses to British biblical scholar Margaret Barker's recent book *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*. Like her previous studies, this one is attracting the attention of Latter-day Saints who have found much of importance to consider in her exploration of Christian origins and her reconstruction of a "temple theology" traceable to Solomon's temple. Rounding out the *Review* are an assessment of Hugh Nibley's economic views related to the law of consecration, a refutation of one antitheist's attempted demolition of the Bible, a reprinting of eminent historian Martin E. Marty's 1989 lecture at Westminster College on the usefulness of the religious past, an editor's introduction by Daniel C. Peterson, and other assorted offerings now taking shape for publication later this summer. ♦

## Blossoming with Books: Syriac Manuscripts from the Egyptian Desert

The birthplace and spiritual heart of Christian monasticism is the Nitrian Desert of Egypt and the long, shallow valley of Scetis (Wadi el-Natron). It was to here, from the fourth century onwards, that Macarius the Great and other of the sainted desert fathers retreated from the world, devoting their lives

to worship and prayer. While some monks chose to live in isolation as hermits, many others banded together to establish the first monasteries, building churches for worship and libraries for study.

These monastic libraries collected many manuscripts and the dry climate of Egypt preserved them well. In fact, most of the premedieval Christian manuscripts we have today come from Egypt. While many texts were written in Greek or Egyptian (Coptic), monks of all nations flocked to Egypt and



brought with them books in their own languages. Regrettably, Scetis suffered from violent incursions, and a series of five raids from 407 to 817 repeatedly plundered the monasteries of their few treasures, including books. Each time the monks rebuilt and, as best they might, refilled their libraries.

Notes added to manuscripts often explained their provenance and history. According to certain of these notes, in perhaps the eighth or early ninth century a wealthy and important Christian named Marutha visited one of the monasteries and asked to see monks from his homeland. Marutha's family was from Takrit in Iraq, a center of Syriac Christianity, and was prominent in a Takritan trade community located in Egypt. Marutha was disheartened to hear that the Syriac-speaking monks were scattered over many monasteries. In a pious act, he purchased for 12,000 gold dinars an unused monastery for these monks to have as their own. This became the Monastery of the Syrians (Deir al-Suriani).

If this account of the monastery's founding is correct,<sup>1</sup> Marutha almost certainly would have endowed this monastery with Syriac books. But if he did, none survived the fifth sack of Scetis in 817 by Arab marauders. In fact, so devastating were these raids that almost no Syriac manuscripts brought to Scetis before 817 survive. One exception is a copy of the homilies of Severus, patriarch of Antioch, who was greatly revered by many of the Egyptian monks. This manuscript was purchased by an abbot named Theodore, which "he bought together with others for the study, reading and spiritual progress of all those who shall read it."<sup>2</sup> It dates to AD 576 and is now preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Library (Vat. Syr. 142).

This manuscript somehow survived the Arab raids and made its way to the new Monastery of the Syrians. Many others were donated by Takritans like Marutha or brought by monks relocating from other monasteries. But the most ancient and valuable of the manuscripts in the monastery's great library were acquired through one monk's initiative and good fortune.

The abbot Moses of Nisibis was a great pastor and administrator who prospered his monastery. When a Muslim vizier tried to levy an onerous poll tax on bishops, monks, and infirm Christians in Egypt, Moses went to Baghdad to petition the caliph

for relief. For five years (927–32) he engaged in this appeal, and while waiting upon the caliph's good pleasure, he also toured extensively the monasteries of Mesopotamia and northern Syria.

Moses was a lover of books, so he employed these visits to acquire volumes for his monastery library. When at last he returned to Egypt, his appeal successful, he brought back with him great treasures of learning—250 manuscripts. Many were purchased, while others were gifts. As impressive as this number is, his acquisitions were important also for their antiquity. The great majority of surviving pre-eighth-century Syriac manuscripts, preserving many rare and important works, which once belonged to Moses's library. Their value to scholars today is inestimable.

Subsequent abbots continued to acquire manuscripts. The precise number is unknown. One early European visitor to Scete reported seeing a great library, quite likely that of the Syrians, containing about 8000 volumes. This is certainly an exaggeration, but even a tenth that number would have been an impressive collection. A 17th-century inventory reported 403 bound volumes, but many volumes would have contained multiple manuscripts. And this did not include fragments, which accumulated in considerable quantity. In 1837, Robert Curzon visited the monastery and found a neglected, stone-vaulted closet "which was filled to the depth of two feet or more with the loose leaves of the Syriac manuscripts."<sup>3</sup> While the exact number is not known, more than 1500 manuscripts have survived to today from the Monastery of the Syrians.

Western travelers and institutions acquired the majority of the monastery's Syriac manuscripts from the 17th to 19th centuries, at times by way of honest purchase and at times, sadly, by some measure of bribery and fraud. They are preserved today in Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, and elsewhere. By far the greatest number is in the British Library. Between 1835 and 1851, almost 550 complete and fragmentary manuscripts were acquired by the British from the Monastery of the Syrians.

But more than a century earlier, in 1707, the Vatican Library sent a young Lebanese Syrian (Maronite) priest named Elias Assemani to the Middle East in search of Syriac manuscripts. He first went to Egypt and succeeded in obtaining a number of manuscripts from the Monastery of the



Syrians. The precise number is uncertain, for while transporting them by boat to Cairo, a storm arose that capsized the vessel, sending all the manuscripts to the bottom of the Nile and drowning one monk. Elias hired divers to retrieve his treasures from the muddy river bottom, and dried them out as best he might, but our only account of the catastrophe reports that “many folios (pages) of them were lost.”<sup>4</sup> Thirty-three Syriac and one Arabic manuscript later arrived at Rome. Whether just portions of those manuscripts were lost, or some volumes in their entirety, is unknown.

While parts are rendered unreadable by water damage, those 33 manuscripts are some of the most ancient and valuable Syriac manuscripts surviving today. Clearly Elias was permitted to handpick gems from the monastery library. In 1715 his uncle, Joseph Simon Assemani, returned to the monastery and selected another 100 for purchase. However, negotiations with the monks failed and he was only able to purchase “a few.” Again, precisely how many is unknown, but of the estimated 50 Syriac manuscripts Joseph Simon acquired for the Vatican Library, nine certainly came from the Syrian Monastery. These include the only surviving copy of the earliest Syriac chronicle (ca. 540), among other rarities. Scholars have determined that yet others of the Syrian Monastery’s manuscripts were acquired by the Vatican Library, previous to the Assemanis, but precisely how is not always known.

In 2005, the Maxwell Institute’s Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts published *Syriac Manuscripts from the Vatican Library, Volume 1*, reproducing 33 Syriac manuscripts from the Vatican collection. These include 16 manuscripts known to be from the Monastery of the Syrians, and at least two others that may be. This DVD is still available for purchase at the BYU Bookstore. Further work on Vatican Library Syriac collection is now in the initial stages of planning. ♦

**By Carl Griffin**

*Associate Director of the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts*

#### Notes

1. Its historicity was advocated by Evelyn White, but no corroborating evidence survives, and recent research by Van Rompay and Schmidt have called it seriously into question. See Hugh G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi ‘n Natrûn*, ed. Walter Hauser (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art,

Egyptian Expedition, 1926–33), 2:312–18; and Lucas Van Rompay and Andrea B. Schmidt, “Takritans in the Egyptian Desert: The Monastery of the Syrians in the Ninth Century,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 1 (2001): 41–60.

2. As cited in White, *Monasteries*, 2:320.

3. As cited in William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838* (London: British Museum, Dept. of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, 1870–72), 3:ix.

4. This account does not come from Elias himself, but from his uncle Joseph Simon: J. S. Assemanus, *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-Vaticana, I* (Rome: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1719), preface, section VII; S. E. Assemanus and J. S. Assemanus, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codicum manuscriptorum catalogus, I, 3* (Rome: Typographia linguarum orientalium, 1759), 77.

## INSIGHTS

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The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. The Maxwell Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at the Maxwell Institute include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

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