



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

Volume 27 | Number 1

Article 4

January 2007

Mary and Elisabeth Topic of Museum of Art Lecture

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights>



Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2007) "Mary and Elisabeth Topic of Museum of Art Lecture," *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship*: Vol. 27: No. 1, Article 4.

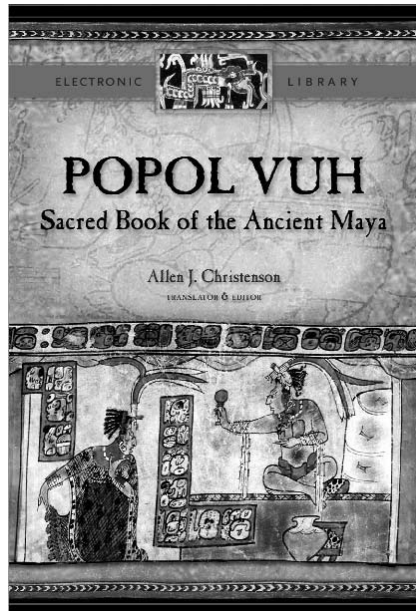
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol27/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Maya Origin Story Now on Searchable CD-ROM

The Popol Vuh, an epic poem that tells the creation story of the Maya, will soon be available in a searchable database published on CD-ROM by the Maxwell Institute's Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART). Prepared by Allen J. Christenson, the database incorporates his recently published edition and translation of the Popol Vuh. The database offers the first-ever publication of a complete set of images of the earliest manuscript of the Popol Vuh, kindly provided by the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Fully searchable, the *Popol Vuh CD-ROM: Sacred Book of the Ancient Maya Electronic Database* links the text to related images of plants, animals, Maya art and architecture, and maps. It also includes a high-resolution scan of the Newberry Library's entire Popol Vuh manuscript. Christenson provides a literal English translation and a free, or nonliteral, English translation that better communicates the flow of the narrative. It also includes a Spanish translation and two K'iche'-Maya versions, one in the older romanized K'iche' script and the other in modernized K'iche'. An audio file allows users to listen to the Popol Vuh in the K'iche'-Maya language out loud. The introduction



and copious footnotes provide historical and cultural context for the Maya culture and the Popol Vuh text itself. The University of Texas Press will distribute the *Popol Vuh CD-ROM* beginning in March 2007.

Christenson, an associate professor of humanities, classics, and comparative literature at BYU, has designed this CD-ROM for scholars as well as for anyone interested in Maya culture or world literature. But he particularly prepared it with the K'iche'-Maya people of Guatemala in mind. Though the Popol Vuh was composed by members of the Maya nobility soon after the Spanish Conquest in the early 16th century, it is based entirely on records dating to pre-Columbian times. Unfortunately, most modern K'iche' Indians have not had the opportunity to read their culture's most important ancient document. Expressing enthusiasm for the project, Guatemalan officials and educators have requested multiple copies.

With its fully searchable electronic format, hundreds of linked images and explanatory footnotes, and Christenson's up-to-date translations, the *Popol Vuh CD-ROM* promises to aid both scholars of Maya studies and the people of Guatemala in understanding the mythic origins of the Maya people. ■

Mary and Elisabeth Topic of Museum of Art Lecture

As part of the ongoing Museum of Art lecture series on the life of Christ, S. Kent Brown, director of FARMS, addressed the topic "The Birth of the Savior" on January 17. Drawing from Luke 1 and 2 and studies on life among ancient Jews, he focused on Mary and Elisabeth, whose lives are only faintly sketched in the scriptures.


Emphasizing the importance of foreordination, Brown began by reviewing scriptural prophecies about Mary. He noted that Book of Mormon prophecy offers more details about her than Bible prophecy does, such as her hometown and even her name. Although Elisabeth appears more indirectly in scriptural prophecy, her positive influence on her son is discernible in the prophecies about John the Baptist. For example,

continued on page 5

which was devoted to articles on Mormons and their beliefs, Midgley concludes that since the SBC event in Salt Lake City in 1998, Southern Baptist leaders have only slightly moderated their anti-Mormon views. Analyzing the 1998 convention itself, Midgley describes some of the vicious anti-Mormon literature prepared especially for the event. He compares the Southern Baptist leaders' statements during the convention with the articles in the 2005 *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* and observes that although some countercultist publishers have been marginalized in the Protestant community, Baptist leadership continues to encourage the promulgation of falsehoods about Latter-day Saint beliefs. And worse, they do it under the guise of love. Daniel C. Peterson notes in his introduction that Midgley's conclusions "raise questions about the efficacy of continued conversations with those whose primary interest is in securing the submission of the Saints."

Also in this number of the *FARMS Review*, Egyptologist Kerry Muhlestein sizes up *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, a 2005 FARMS publication edited by John Gee and Brian M.

Hauglid. In addition, physical chemist Robert R. Bennett and philosopher Richard Sherlock, in separate essays, ably grapple with imagined tensions and incompatibilities between Mormonism and science. In responding to the hasty conclusions drawn by one disaffected Latter-day Saint, Bennett offers reasoned, faithful perspectives on why it is folly "to presume to limit God by virtue of man's current understanding of the physical universe." In similar fashion, Sherlock enters the controversy of intelligent design—the idea that the complexities of living beings point to an intelligent creator and cannot be explained solely on the basis of randomness and natural selection. He explains pertinent terms and concepts, addresses the charge that the theory shortcuts science, and lays out a case for why Latter-day Saints and serious Christians "generally should be sympathetic to and supportive of intelligent design" and accepting of "God's intervention in nature."

To view the *FARMS Review* online or to purchase a copy, please visit the Maxwell Institute Web site (maxwellinstitute.byu.edu). 

MOA Lecture cont. from page 3

that her son was filled with the Holy Ghost from birth implies that Elisabeth was a person of holy ways and habits, Brown said.

Brown then sketched what family life in rural Nazareth may have been like, and he described Jewish traditions of betrothal and marriage that probably affected Mary, Joseph, and Elisabeth. Though from different tribes, Elisabeth (of Levi) and Mary (of Judah) were emotionally close enough for Mary to journey 100 miles for an extended stay with her cousin. Brown observed that the cousins must have had a common relative who married outside the tribe and that, though rare, such marriages did take place in ancient Israel. Their homes were settings where Mary and Elisabeth underwent some of their most sacred experiences, including John's birth, Elisabeth's prophecy of the Savior,

Zacharias's recovery of his speech, and the angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary.

According to Brown, Luke 1 and 2 are stories of beginnings: the beginning of fulfilled prayers for Zacharias and Elisabeth, the beginning of Mary's experiences as the mother of the Savior, and the beginning of the miracles that heralded the Messiah's birth. Though little is known of their lives, Mary and Elisabeth influenced not only the spiritual development of their sons but also, through them, the lives of all who would follow Jesus Christ.

The lectures will continue on Wednesday nights through April 11, with most speakers drawn from BYU's Religious Education faculty. Upcoming *Insights* reports will cover the presentations by two Maxwell Institute scholars: John W. Welch ("The Five Faces of the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount," January 17) and Andrew C. Skinner ("Crucifixion and Resurrection," March 21). 