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Occasional Papers Spotlights the Book of Mormon

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INSIGHTS

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

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Occasional Papers Spotlights the Book of Mormon

The latest issue of the Maxwell Institute's *Occasional Papers* (number 5 in the series) focuses exclusively on what Joseph Smith called "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion"—the Book of Mormon. As M. Gerald Bradford, editor of the series and associate executive director of the Maxwell Institute notes, "the papers in this volume show that the Book of Mormon can be studied and understood from a wide variety of scholarly disciplines."


The lead-off article is a Book of Mormon chronology offering a detailed view of the book's remarkable history, from the early visits of Moroni to the critical text project now in progress, from the Danish translation in 1851 to the Twi (a language spoken in Ghana) translation in 2005.

In "That Most Important of All Books': A Printing History of the Book of Mormon," David J. Whittaker surveys the printing history of the Book of Mormon in the English language, focusing on the first edition of 1830, as well as on other editions published before Joseph Smith's death in 1844. Throughout this printing history, Church leaders have sought to make the volume available in both an accurate and useful format but with the key

concern being its role in bettering the lives of those who read it.

The next article, "The Golden Bible in the Bible's Golden Age," offers a perspective on the Book of Mormon from a prominent scholar who is not a Latter-day Saint—Paul Gutjahr, professor at Indiana University. As Gutjahr points out, many early converts to Mormonism frequently spoke of how they came to faith in Joseph Smith's teachings by reading the Book of Mormon and the Bible side-by-side. "It is obvious by the virtue of the place Mormonism holds as the world's fastest growing religion that the book which gave the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints its popular name is one of the most important written texts ever to emerge in the United States."

In "His Secret is with the Righteous': Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon," Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt shows that many writers in the Book of Mormon were familiar with the literary forms, themes, and vocabulary of Hebrew wisdom literature. What's more, Book of Mormon authors clearly understood the search for wisdom to be a quest for eternal life and the mysteries of God.

Occasional Papers number 5 is now available through the BYU Bookstore. For more information, call 1-800-253-2578 or visit the Web site at byubookstore.com. 

Documentary Exploring the Life of Jesus Christ Planned

With the full backing of the BYU administration, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship—in partnership with Religious Education, BYU Broadcasting and the department of Theatre and Media Arts—is laying plans to begin filming a seven-part documentary series on the ministry and life of Jesus Christ, beginning with his role as premortal Deity, continuing through his mortality, and ending with his role as judge of all. The series is provisionally titled *Messiah: Behold the Lamb of God*. The project envisions a high definition series that presents the views of Brigham Young

University scholars. Each of the twenty-six minute episodes will explore a segment of the Savior's mission and will feature contemporary scholarly discussions regarding the Savior's ministry.

The series was conceived by S. Kent Brown, current director of FARMS and the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies, largely in response to the impressively produced 1998 PBS documentary series *From Jesus to Christ*. Although that series offered a lot of good information about Jesus and his times, its editors began from a viewpoint of non-faith. Brown judged that a documentary series that rests on the broader range of LDS scripture, paired with insights from modern

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
The Neal A. Maxwell
Institute for
Religious Scholarship
200 WAIH, BYU
Provo, Utah 84602
(801) 422-9229
(800) 327-6715
maxwellinstitute.byu.edu

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