



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

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## Full Issue

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# Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOLUME 26 | 2006

Number 1

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## ISPART Renamed Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

Brigham Young University's Board of Trustees recently approved the renaming of BYU's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (ISPART) to the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

"By renaming ISPART, BYU honors the memory and life's work of Elder Maxwell," said BYU president Cecil O. Samuelson. "This change firmly sets the future direction of the Institute, which is to promote profound scholarship supporting the restored gospel of Jesus Christ—something Elder Maxwell cared about deeply."


Elder Maxwell served The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 23 years as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. "He was an articulate voice of reason and revelation—the consummate disciple-scholar who served the Church and the people of the world," said Andrew C. Skinner, executive director of the Maxwell Institute.

## New Translation Launches METI's Library of the Christian East Series

One of the misconceptions that many Westerners have is that all Arabs are Muslims and that all Muslims are Arabs. In fact, many of the major Islamic countries in the world (e.g., Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and the most populous of them all, Indonesia) are not Arab, and large minorities in some Arab countries are not Muslim. Christianity is a Near Eastern religion, not a European one, and it has been in the Near East since its origin. (An Egyptian Christian friend once complained to

"The scholars associated with the Maxwell Institute are honored to come under the umbrella of Elder Maxwell's name," Skinner added.

Cory Maxwell, son of Elder and Sister Maxwell, said his family is pleased by this development and honored that Elder Maxwell's name is being associated with that to which he devoted his life.

For more than 25 years, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) has been conducting research and publishing books and periodicals that have both furthered scholarship and made friends for the university and the Church of Jesus Christ. Five years ago FARMS was joined by the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) and the Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI) to form ISPART.   
—BYU press release, 1 March 2006



Elder Neal A. Maxwell © IRI

me about how tired he had become of Americans and Europeans asking him whether his family had been converted by the Germans, the French, or the British. His ancestors, he pointed out, had been converted by Mark, the writer of the Second Gospel, in the first century AD. My own forebears, in Scandinavia, didn't accept Christianity until roughly a millennium later.)

Another common misconception is that Christendom can essentially be divided between Protestants and Catholics. In fact, though, Protestantism is a fairly recent religious minority in the Christian world. The much older division is that

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## FARMS Documentary Premieres in Washington DC

*Golden Road: The Ancient Incense Trail*, a new FARMS documentary about the legendary route used by Arabia's incense traders, premiered at the Washington DC Temple Visitors' Center on 5 November 2005 to a group of foreign and U.S. dignitaries.

The film is about the people and places that shaped one of the most important economic highways in the ancient world. It offers a firsthand look at the trade, politics, and diplomacy associated with the trail that brought riches to those daring and entrepreneurial enough to confront the treacherous Arabian desert, the threat of marauders, and the plodding pace of desert caravans.

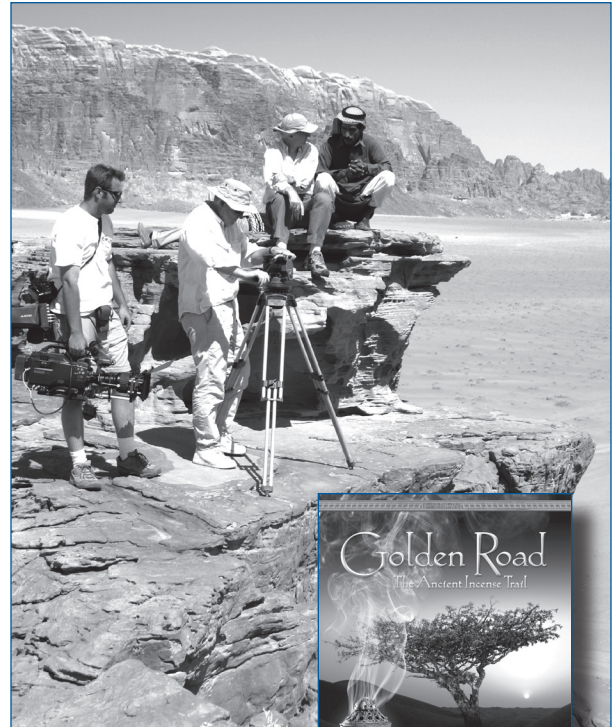
Directed by acclaimed Latter-day Saint filmmaker Peter Johnson, the documentary is a joint production of FARMS and Timpanogos Entertainment. It was filmed on location in Oman, Yemen, Jordan, and Israel and rests on the most recent scholarship.

*Golden Road* offers a context for *Journey of Faith*, a similar documentary exploring the route that Latter-day Saint scholars believe Lehi and his family took as they journeyed from Jerusalem to the New World. The two films were produced at the same time and share some footage of Middle Eastern scenes and interviews with scholars.

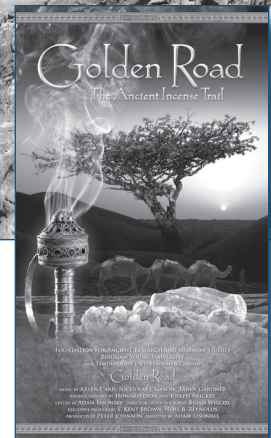
"The film is set against the spectacular backdrop of Arabia," said S. Kent Brown, executive producer and academic director of the film. "More than any other attempt, it succeeds at giving audiences access to this area. It brings people inside this trek across an ancient trail."

Representatives from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, and Syria attended the premiere, and their response to the film was very positive. At an opening reception, the guests viewed a display of books published by Brigham Young University's Middle Eastern Text Initiative (METI, also part of the Maxwell Institute) and listened to remarks by Sandra Rogers, international vice president of BYU; Peter Johnson; and S. Kent Brown.

"The intent of the premiere was to introduce the film to representatives of Middle Eastern



The *Golden Road* film crew sets up in Wadi Rum, Jordan.



countries, and in a sense to say to them that this is part of their story," said Brown.

All guests, as well as foreign government agencies, received a DVD of the documentary and were granted legal rights to show the film in their respective countries.

Among the 351 guests in attendance were His Excellency Imad Moustapha, Ambassador of Syria to the United States; H. E. Hussein Hasouna, Ambassador of the League of Arab States; H. E. Hunaina Al-Mugheiry, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman; Dr. Walid Abdelnasser, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Egypt; Mr. Abdelkader Hamdad, Counselor of the Congressional Liaison of Algeria; Senator Robert F. Bennett of Utah; Senator Gordon H. Smith of Oregon; Mrs. Marilyn Phillips Hodgson, President of the American Foundation for the Study of Man; and Mr. L. Ralph Mecham, Director of the Administrative Offices of the U.S. Courts.

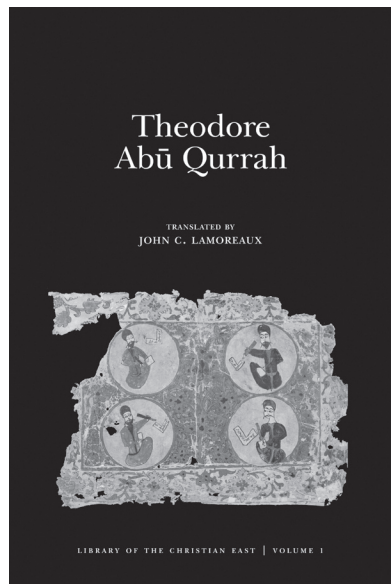
Plans are under way to air *Golden Road* in the United States in the near future. 📺

## New Translation cont. from page 1

between Western Christianity (essentially the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries) and Eastern Christianity (including, but not limited to, such groups as the Greek Orthodox and the Russian Orthodox). There is, and always has been, an entire world of Christianity, rich and full of variety, beyond the (to us) more familiar realm of Protestants and Catholics.

A new book just published by Brigham Young University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative (METI) may help to overcome both misconceptions. *Theodore Abu Qurrah* is the first volume in METI's newest publication series, the Library of the Christian East, which now joins three sister ventures—the Islamic Translation Series, the Medical Works of Moses Maimonides, and Eastern Christian Texts. (Unlike them, this new series is monolingual—English only—lacking the original-language text on the facing page.) The series editor of the Library of the Christian East is David G. K. Taylor, of the University of Oxford.

*Theodore Abu Qurrah* is an anthology of essays by the earliest Christian Arabic writer whose name we know. Living between roughly AD 750 and 820 or 825, Abu Qurrah was a monk at the important Mar Saba monastery in the Judean desert, although, for a time, he served as




the Melkite bishop of Haran, in northern Mesopotamia. (The Melkites—the term comes from a Syriac word meaning “imperial”—were Syrian and Egyptian Christians who sided with the patriarch of Constantinople, the capital city of the Byzantine Empire, in the disputes that arose after the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. They were, thus, the “Emperor’s men.”)

Abu Qurrah’s native language was Syriac, the Christian form of Aramaic (the language that Jesus and the first apostles spoke). But he also spoke and wrote in Greek, a language first brought to the region via the conquests of Alexander the Great, as well as in Arabic, which had arrived in Syria with the coming of the Muslim Arabs in the middle of the seventh century. Abu Qurrah spent his life defending not only his own form of Christianity against rivals, but Christianity itself against Judaism and against the rising challenge of Islam—which would nonetheless, over the coming centuries, largely but not entirely absorb the ancient Christian

communities of North Africa and the Near East.

This new book, the work of Southern Methodist University’s John C. Lamoreaux, represents a nearly complete collection of Abu Qurrah’s surviving writings; most of the essays included have been translated into English for the first time from their original Arabic and Greek.

Nineteen essays follow a very substantial introduction, by the translator, that discusses Abu Qurrah’s life and ministry. Among them are such titles as “That Christianity Is from God,” “Against the Jews,” “On the Characteristics of the True Religion,” “On the Death of Christ,” “On the Trinity,” “On Free Will,” and “Refutations of the Saracens [i.e., of the Muslim Arabs].”

*Theodore Abu Qurrah* is available from the University of Chicago Press as well as via the BYU Bookstore ([www.byubookstore.com](http://www.byubookstore.com)).  —reported by Daniel C. Peterson, director and editor-in-chief of METI

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## FARMS Unveils New Web Site

In December 2005 FARMS released a new version of its Web site. In response to feedback from people who have used the site over the last several years, the new FARMS site boasts additional content and enhanced features.

For several years, the FARMS site has featured an extensive online archive of articles from FARMS periodicals, including the *Insights* newsletter, *The FARMS Review*, and the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. All of these articles, including those from the latest issues of the periodicals, are now freely available to visitors to the Web site. In addition, all four volumes of the *FARMS Occasional Papers* are now available online.

FARMS enthusiasts will be especially delighted by the new Books section, where chapters from eight popular FARMS books are now available (to FARMS subscribers only). These chapters, as well as all of the other articles on the site, are categorized by publication, author, and subject to make them easier to find. Additional book chapters will be posted throughout the year, and eventually all of the chapters from the entire FARMS library of books will be available online.

One of the most frequently heard complaints about the FARMS Web site has been the lack of a sophisticated search engine. The new site features an all-new search feature, powered by Google, the leading provider of search engine technology. Although the Google search is already very advanced and accurate, the more people use it to find articles, the more the search engine will be able to accurately rank and display results.

The new site has also been reprogrammed to work with almost any Internet browser, to comply with guidelines for users with disabilities, and to follow strict security rules. The reprogramming results in a better, faster, and more usable site.

Those who use the new site are invited to e-mail their comments and suggestions to the FARMS Web team at [farmswebcomments@byu.edu](mailto:farmswebcomments@byu.edu). 

### PUBLICATIONS

#### By Maxwell Institute Scholars with Other Publishers

***Defining the Word: Understanding the History and Language of the Bible***, by John A. Tvedtnes (Covenant Communications, 2006), is designed to acquaint readers of the King James Version of the Bible with the history of the English text and to help them understand the peculiarities of the KJV language that make it difficult reading for modern speakers of English.

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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.

The Maxwell Institute makes reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer-reviewed to ensure that scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these materials are used to support further research and publications.

#### For more information

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