



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

---

Volume 24 | Number 1

Article 3

---

January 2004

## Lecture Report

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

(2004) "Lecture Report," *Insights: The Newsletter of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship*: Vol. 24: No. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol24/iss1/3>

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](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

what they must do in order to remove the awful cloud of darkness, Aminadab reminded them, “You must *repent*, and *cry* unto the voice, even until ye shall have *faith* in Christ, who was taught unto you by *Alma*, and *Amulek*, and *Zeezrom*; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you” (Helaman 5:41). Aminadab’s counsel repeats what the Nephite dissenters likely heard years before but apparently had only now learned.

These considerations may suggest that Aminadab and some of his fellows were Zoramites

who as young men had heard those Nephites preach. More significantly, the account of their conversion shows how God can confirm the words of his servants the prophets in mercy as well as in judgment. [📖](#)

**By Matthew Roper**

**Note**

1. The only time when these three prophets are specifically said to have served together was during the mission to the Zoramites (Alma 31:6), though it is possible that they served together at other times as well.

LECTURE REPORT

### Early Christian Monastic Prayer

On 10 October 2003, Father Columba Stewart presented an Institute-sponsored lecture at BYU titled “The Practices of Egyptian Monastic Prayer: Desert, Cell, and Community.” Fr. Stewart is a Benedictine monk of St. John’s Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, where he is professor of theology at St. John’s School of Theology and teaches monastic studies. He is also the interim director of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, which is working closely with the Institute on its manuscript preservation projects in the Middle East and Ethiopia.

Fr. Stewart has published extensively on early Christian spirituality. His lecture provided an opportunity for students and faculty to hear the fruits of some of his latest research on prayer in early Christianity, particularly monastic prayer. He described the role of the scriptures, particularly the Psalms, in the spiritual life of Egyptian monks of the fourth through sixth centuries. Through a process of prayerful and thoughtful reading, as well as memorization (the book of Psalms and the entire New Testament would be memorized in the first years in the desert), the monks of this period used the scriptures throughout the day to praise God, challenge and transform themselves, and battle the demons.

### Ancient Mesoamerican Initiative

At an Institute-sponsored brown bag lecture on 29 October, BYU anthropology professor

John E. Clark, a member of the FARMS board and director of the New World Archaeology Foundation (NWAFF), reported on the progress of the Institute’s Ancient Mesoamerican Initiative, which he directs. Clark highlighted the cities included in the Mesoamerican Early Cities Project that are the most pressing and promising of the Institute’s research priorities. Of the 20 cities included in this project, funding is needed to proceed with 14 of them. Donations from Leon and Randie Reinhart and Alan and Karen Ashton have allowed work to begin in several cities.

Clark says the task of conducting this kind of research is so enormous that it exceeds the reach of any researcher or team of researchers and must be managed. For example, in Mesoamerican research, the Institute could accomplish more if it functioned less as a research organization and more as a grant-giving organization. This would enable the Institute to select and fund external researchers who would report their findings to the Institute.

### Maya Creation Mythology in the First Century AD

At a campus-wide lecture at BYU on 17 November, Professor William A. Saturno, an archaeologist from the University of New Hampshire specializing in Mesoamerican civilization, spoke on Maya creation mythology in the first century AD. His slide presentation and discussion focused on his discovery (in March 2001) of San

[continued on page 4](#)

## Lecture Report continued from page 3

Bartolo, an archaeological site in northeastern Guatemala. The site, which contains a number of structures and is still being excavated, has yielded the oldest intact Maya murals ever found and is providing new insights into Maya prehistory. The beautiful, well-preserved murals predate those at Bonampak, a Maya site in Chiapas, Mexico, by several hundred years.

Saturno began by narrating the hazards of the first expedition and his accidental discovery of the murals. He then discussed physical aspects of the site (a temple complex built upon earlier structures, tunnels dug by looters in search of prized artifacts, and the earliest-known painted Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions) and interpreted mural scenes as depicting the birth and the emergence of the maize god from the underworld. He went on to explain the symbolic nature of caves in Maya belief and speculated that the finely stylized, flowing Maya inscriptions (largely indecipherable) suggest a writing tradition going back earlier than suspected.

Though relatively small, San Bartolo unexpectedly has three hallmarks of Classic Maya civilization—reference to a ruling lord, hieroglyphics, and art, Saturno said. Yet because it predates the Classic period and lies outside the El Mirador Basin as a seemingly sovereign state, its presence there raises vexing questions and introduces complexity into views on the development of Maya civilization.

The lecture, held in the auditorium of the Harold B. Lee Library, was sponsored by the New World Archaeological Foundation, the Reinhart Family Foundation, and the Institute.

## Lehi and Sariah: New Light from Arabia

On 18 November, S. Kent Brown, a BYU professor of ancient scripture speaking at BYU's Harold B. Lee Library's "House of Learning" lecture, shared some of his research on Lehi and Sariah's journey from Jerusalem to Bountiful, conjectured to lie on the southern coast of modern Oman. Brown is a member of the FARMS board, editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, and director of Ancient Studies at BYU.



Wilderness area near Nihm, Yemen. Photo by Brent C. Hall.

Brown showed film clips from his visit to Yemen in September 2001, where he and a filming team photographed sections of the famed incense trail, an ancient trade route that Lehi's company likely followed as they traveled through Arabia. Three altars found in the ruins of a temple near Marib, Yemen, bear inscriptions containing the name *Nhm* (apparently a variant of the place-name *Nahom*, 1 Nephi 16:34) and date to the time of Lehi and Sariah. After making additional geographical connections with Nephi's account of his family's wilderness journey, Brown concluded that the Book of Mormon is a "real account about real people who went through real places." The Institute plans further research and filming of areas associated with Lehi's trail as permission and funding become available. 📺



## FARMS CELEBRATES

*25 Years of Faithful Research and Publication on the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture*

Stay Tuned for More on This Milestone Later This Year