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Brown Bag Report

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Insights

A WINDOW ON THE ANCIENT WORLD VOLUME 23 | 2003

Number 1

<http://farms.byu.edu>

BYU, Institute Continue Presence at Scholarly Conference

Several BYU and Institute scholars attended the joint annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature held in Toronto, Ontario, last November. In recent years this scholarly venue has enabled BYU entities specializing in religious scholarship to join ranks in the interest of promoting their recent publications while cultivating professional contacts, staying abreast of developments in the field, and presenting their research findings at conference sessions.

Although BYU researchers did not deliver scholarly papers at the conference as they have in past years, the university continued its customary presence there with its popular exhibit and through other involvement. In addition, several Institute scholars and other personnel responded to invitations to give firesides in the Toronto area or speak at local ward meetings. Reports on a few of those presentations follow.

Conference Participation, Firesides

Institute board member John W. Welch presided at a morning session of the Biblical Law Section in which five papers were summarized and discussed. Topics included cities of refuge, the case of Phineas,

and several aspects of purity and incest laws exemplified in the Bible and at the community at Qumran. Addressing a ward gathering two days earlier, Welch discussed effective tools for gospel scholarship and scripture study and presented recent findings illustrating the need to pay close attention to details of scripture that are illuminated by ancient studies.

In a fireside at the Toronto stake center, Institute scholar Kristian Heal discussed the contents of certain Syriac manuscripts residing in the Vatican Library that the Institute was allowed to digitize. He focused on interesting aspects of Joseph of Egypt's account (see Genesis 37–50) as retold in the Syriac tradition. Heal showed that by adding extra narratives to the story, Syriac Christians were able to emphasize that Joseph was a type of Christ and teach more clearly the principles of repentance and forgiveness.

At another fireside, BYU Hebrew professor Donald W. Parry addressed the topic "LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls." He spoke about the discovery and content of the scrolls and their significance as aids for better understanding the Old Testament. He concluded by touching on several prophecies that find fulfillment in Jesus Christ's life, mission, and atoning sacrifice.

In a similar engagement, Brent Hall, director of operations at the Institute, spoke on the Institute's

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On 30 October John L. Clark, emeritus instructor in the Church Educational System, spoke on the topic "Painting Out the Messiah: Theologies of the Dissidents." Clark began by showing that Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob all taught specifically about the Messiah but that dissidents like Sherem and Nehor opposed their teachings with "theologies" that denied Christ's redemptive role and godhood, thereby causing many


believers to lose faith. Clark then examined the arguments of the dissidents in the Book of Mormon to show what the prophets were teaching and what the objections to those teachings were. He discusses this topic at length in an article in the current issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, mailed along with this newsletter.

On 6 November Mark Thomas of BYU's Marriott School of Management reviewed accounts of

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It is expected that BYU's established presence at the AAR/SBL meetings will continue to encourage the university's religious scholars and related specialists to publish research that will further strengthen the academic footing of Mormon studies while contributing in important ways to religious scholarship in general. 

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the angel Moroni's 1823 visit to Joseph Smith in terms of form criticism, a literary approach that Thomas believes effectively counters charges that Joseph invented the story. Thomas noted that prophets speak in language familiar to them and that literary forms influence the way they think and write. He said that Joseph's accounts of the angel's visit reflect a kind of revival experience consistent with the dramatic conversions seen at camp meetings with their focus on guilt, a state of conviction, and forgiveness. Joseph's various tellings of the visitation have a common core, fit a real-world setting, and contain hidden authenticating details—all of which deflect the charges of detractors and place the burden of proof on them, Thomas concluded. 

INSTITUTE NEWS

Call for Papers

As announced in the last issue of *Insights*, the Institute invites interested persons to submit papers for possible presentation at an upcoming conference on Latter-day Saint views on the sacrifice of Isaac. The conference will be held at BYU on 11 October 2003.

Papers should deal with some aspect of the sacrifice of Isaac as recorded in Genesis 22 and should reflect close readings of scriptural texts and appropriate use of relevant outside material. Examples of broad topics include but are not limited to typology of the sacrifice of Isaac, literary devices in the account, historical background of the sacrifice, and Latter-day Saint use of the account.

Detailed outlines of proposed presentations were due on 31 January 2003. Further deadlines are as follows:

15 March 2003: Participants whose submissions are provisionally accepted will be notified.

31 August 2003: PowerPoint presentations are due.

31 December 2003: Final drafts for publication are due.

Please send correspondence to Book of Abraham Conference, c/o Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, WAIH, Provo, UT 84602. Electronic submissions should be sent to bookofabraham@byu.edu.

Insights

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and Mormon Studies (FARMS)**

**Institute for the Study and
Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts**
Brigham Young University

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FARMS is part of Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts. As such, it encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. Under the FARMS imprint, the Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at FARMS 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.

FARMS makes interim and final 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. As a service to teachers and students of the scriptures, research results are distributed in both scholarly and popular formats.

It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and appreciate more fully the scriptural witnesses of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

For more information or to order publications, contact us at
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