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## The Editor's Notebook

S. Kent Brown

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**Title** The Editor's Notebook

**Author(s)** S. Kent Brown

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**Abstract** Summary of current issue.

## THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

At its heart, this issue of the *Journal* celebrates the Book of Mormon as a book. The four studies that focus on the European translations that appeared during 1852—Welsh, Italian, German, and French—underscore the urgency that leaders and missionaries then felt to have in hand copies of the work that demonstrated above all the divine calling of their beloved prophet Joseph Smith. For most European readers, of course, the English publication would not do. Those involved in the translations worked with considerable persistence and skill to produce versions that have stood the test of time. And that test consists of the ability of the translated versions of the book to touch the lives of people deeply enough that they changed their lives and set out in fresh, Spirit-driven directions.

Except for the Welsh translation, which John S. Davis completed almost single-handedly, each of the translations has undergone later revisions that have benefited from a carefully regularized and institutionalized approach to translating efforts. After all, there is virtue in doctrinal and conceptual consistency across translations so that they agree with the inspired English version that the Prophet Joseph produced “by the power of God” (D&C 1:29; Mormon 8:16). Even so, we stand in awe of the tremendous effort by a few to translate and publish the Book of Mormon into four languages within a short amount of time. The astonishing character of this accomplishment is thrown into sharp relief when we consider that only 56 translations of the full Book of Mormon text had appeared by September 2000 (39 others were available in “selections”). Since 1852, the church has published only 13 new foreign-language translations for each of the four European translations. If one adds the Danish translation that was published the previous year, 1851, the ratio becomes 1 in 11 rather than 1 in 14. Moreover, in those days there were few Latter-day Saints who spoke and wrote in languages other than English, which makes the accomplishment all the more impressive. To be sure, the process of making translations available has been a companion to the speed with which the church has been able to move into other regions of the world. But the publications of 1852 stand as a notable witness to the tireless dedication of a few.

In their own way, the articles by Valentin Arts and Ehab Abunuwara lift the Book of Mormon as a book into the spotlight, though from very different angles. Brother Arts deals with a feature underlying important segments of the Book of Mormon, the sources from the Jaredite people. In his study he seeks to uncover both the Jaredite contributions to the book as it now stands as well as—most importantly—the contribution of the brother of Jared to sacred history through the recording of his vision that now lies within the “sealed portion” of the plates once entrusted to Joseph Smith (see Ether 4:1–7). In a different vein, Brother Abunuwara, a native of Nazareth, recounts his initial encounter with the Book of Mormon as a book for learning English and,

because of his background, his growing awareness of passages that link back to the book’s Near Eastern origins.

Two of the most persistent features of the Book of Mormon have to do with the visit of the resurrected Savior to Nephites and Lamanites and the possible vestiges of that visit that may still linger among native cultures in the New World. Diane Wirth takes up this pair of issues in her study of Quetzalcoatl and the Maya Maize God, pointing to possible connections with the Savior but also adding an important set of cautions about concluding too much from the available evidence.

One of the most important studies to appear in this issue is that of Camille Williams. She directs her skills to the question of why so few women are mentioned in the Book of Mormon. She sets this matter against the wider backdrop of feminist studies on the Bible and, from a woman’s point of view, offers compelling observations why the Book of Mormon can and does speak relevantly and spiritually to women.

John Clark’s study asks a fresh set of questions about one of a host of elements that lie just under the surface of the Book of Mormon account—for example, what can we learn about those who rate mention in the narrative chiefly because they opposed the dominant religious views within Nephite society? Brother Clark’s study uncovers a number of the unifying ties that linked dissident movements to one another, including their conscious dismissal of the need for a redeeming Messiah.

For several years the editor and associate editors felt a need for “soul food” within the pages of the *Journal*. Some of our past authors have graciously offered that to readers. With this issue we seek to regularize this aspect by adding a department that we have titled “With Real Intent,” an expression borrowed from Moroni 10:4. Our first author for this new department is James Faulconer, a professor of philosophy and former dean of general and honors education at Brigham Young University.

Not least, we wanted to publish an interview with the former editor of the *Journal*, John L. Sorenson. We thought it very worthwhile to gain an appreciation of his thoughts about the Book of Mormon. Throughout his career, his orientation to Book of Mormon studies has allowed him to view the text in interesting and provocative ways, as the interview will show.

This issue of the *Journal*, the first under a new editorial team, is a bit longer than issues of the recent past. We have felt as an editorial board that we wanted to offer to readers a few more of the riches that our authors have found within the pages of the Book of Mormon. We judge the studies published herein to be of the same quality as those that have appeared in past pages of the *Journal*. We invite all to read for information and edification.