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The Editor's Notebook

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Title The Editor's Notebook

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Abstract The editor introduces the topics discussed in this issue's articles.

THE EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

I have come to expect an almost endless stream of splendors from the Book of Mormon. As others, when I read its pages, I bring a type of perception, imagining that I am seeing a very wide range of its treasures. Then an author surprises me by digging out an important jewel from an unexpected nook, hinting that others—many others—lie in other corners, if we are paying close attention. So it is with the studies in this issue.

No fewer than three focus on one aspect or another of the book of Alma, turning up one nugget after another. Sherrie Johnson's study on the Zoramites finally puts flesh and bone on these people, making their aspirations and characteristics visible to all of us. Appealing to modern sociological studies, she makes a plausible case for the reasons that these people withdrew from the mother Nephite culture, fitting them inside the political and religious milieu of their day. Thomas Wayment's article brings an entirely different kind of focus, to a verse found in Alma 7. He has deftly and carefully woven together the bits of evidence that lay out the Hebrew connections to a quotation from the book of Isaiah. Then, in a completely different vein Chris Conkling examines the recently published original and printer's manuscripts of the Book of Mormon and proposes a plausible solution to the longstanding problem of who the mysterious Amalekites were. This matter stands front and center in Alma's record because they seemingly caused him no end of grief.

A fourth study that takes up an aspect of a single record is Gawain Wells's treatment of the place and roles of children inside the book of 3 Nephi. Children, as Wells observes, formed one of the chief focuses of the activities and words of the Risen Christ during his three-day visit. Why so? Wells sets out to answer this question.

Two other studies range more broadly across the entire Book of Mormon text. Lindon Robison explores the characterization of rich and poor, as both theological and social categories, investigating the place of economic prosperity within the hegemony of the Lord. With similar broad strokes, RoseAnn Benson and Stephen Ricks cast a wide net in identifying the legal and cultural connections of the verb *to know* both within the world of the ancient Near East and within the Book of Mormon, illustrating that its main peoples came from that place, bringing their cultural and legal standards with them.

In a study of external evidences for the Book of Mormon, John Sorenson brings his considerable learning to bear on the question of pre-Columbian contacts between the Old and New Worlds. He concludes that, on the basis of a growing number of studies, the evidence for such contacts now drowns out the feeble replies of those who want to see the New World as an isolated island until AD 1492.

The modern story of the Book of Mormon, which the *Journal* has long featured, is the subject of the final two articles. Richard Anderson, in a study first presented to the Mormon History Association in 2003, has turned his finely honed skills onto a matter raised by a growing chorus of critics who conclude that some of the Eight Witnesses eventually turned from their testimonies about the reality of the golden plates that Joseph Smith showed to them. Anderson demonstrates that such has never been the case. With a different turn and with his engaging style, Van Gessel brings us inside the challenges of creating a translation of the Book of Mormon into a modern language, Japanese. Gessel tells a story that features the tireless devotion of many, underscoring the continuing spiritual influence of the volume.

NEW DEPARTMENT

The editors of the *Journal* are pleased to announce that Charles L. Swift, assistant professor of ancient scripture, has accepted an invitation to join the editorial board as an associate editor. We extend to him our warmest welcome. Dr. Swift, who holds a PhD in educational leadership from Brigham Young University, earned after student days at the Columbia University Law School in New York City, brings carefully honed literary interests and skills to the pages of the Book of Mormon, having already written extensively on Henry David Thoreau and Mark Twain. The next issue of the *Journal* will see the publication of his fine study on the literary ties of the dream of Lehi to other ancient visionary sources.

Brother Swift's special duty for the *Journal*, besides joining the overall guiding team, will be to shepherd a new department that we have tentatively titled "Types and Shadows," a department that will feature both literary artifacts that grow out of the ancient world and also unusual literary patterns that appear to be tied to cultural characteristics of Book of Mormon society.

We wish him well in this endeavor.