



2008

Editor's Notebook

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Hedges, Andrew H. (2008) "Editor's Notebook," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*: Vol. 17: No. 1, Article 2.
Available at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol17/iss1/2>

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NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title Editor's Notebook

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Reference *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture*
17/1-2 (2008): 3-4.

ISSN 1948-7487 (print), 2167-7565 (online)

Abstract The editor gives a brief history of the *Journal* and gives his vision for the future of the publication.

Editor's Notebook

The *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* was first published sixteen years ago, under the editorial direction of Stephen D. Ricks. Seven years later John L. Sorenson, as the *Journal's* new editor, changed its format to make the contents more accessible to specialist and nonspecialist readers alike. Under the direction of Sorenson's successor, S. Kent Brown, the *Journal* has continued to feature first-rate scholarship on the Book of Mormon, often accompanied by beautiful visual aids and images. Thanks to these scholars' vision and editorial skills, thousands of people now enjoy the *Journal* either as subscribers or through the Internet, where they are able to stay abreast of the best that scholarship has to offer on the Book of Mormon.

Partly as a result of the *Journal's* success, and partly in answer to the apparent need for a scholarly, faithful venue in which other Latter-day scriptures can regularly be discussed, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has decided to expand the *Journal's* scope to include all of what might be termed "Restoration Scripture"—those books of Latter-day Saint scripture and related texts that were revealed through the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith. These include the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. With this issue, accordingly, the title of the *Journal* has been changed to the *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture*—"the Book of Mormon" being retained in the title not only to help provide a sense of continuity with the former title but also in recognition of that book's continuing role as the keystone of the Mormon faith. Highlighting the Book of Mormon also seems

appropriate in light of the recent establishment of the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies at the Institute.

With the retirement of Kent Brown from Brigham Young University, the Institute has asked Andrew Hedges to assume the editorship of the expanded *Journal*. Grant Hardy, Steven Harper, Jennifer Lane, and Kerry Muhlestein have agreed to serve as associate editors. The editors would like to thank Kent Brown and his predecessors, as well as the staff at FARMS and the Maxwell Institute, for all that they have done over the years to make the *Journal* what it is today. We would also like to thank BYU's and the Maxwell Institute's administration for their encouragement and support of scholarship in the foundational scriptures of the restoration.

Our hope is that the expanded *Journal* will be a venue where scholars from a variety of backgrounds can explore, discuss, and even debate important topics relating to the texts, contexts, and meaning of latter-day scripture. We believe that part of this includes reexamining and unpacking familiar assumptions and arguments—even those that have found their best expression in past issues of the *Journal* and related publications. We believe, too, that there are many topics yet to be explored in both the Book of Mormon and other restoration scriptures, and hope contributors and readers alike will consider the *Journal* a fitting venue for introducing new subjects and directions for study.

As we revisit old arguments and pursue new lines of inquiry, readers will quickly see that in many cases scholars disagree—sometimes strongly—in their assumptions, the relative weight they place on different pieces of evidence, and

their conclusions. This is the nature of academic discourse. It takes time and patience, but it is through this critiquing, reviewing, and offering alternative explanations that we advance our understanding of the issues raised through a study of the meaning, history, and contexts of texts. We hope our readers will be open to the idea that final answers are not yet available for many interesting and important questions related to the scriptures of the restoration, and that they will be patient with scholars' efforts to work through the issues leading to those answers.

One might argue that if there has been a weakness in LDS scholarship in the past—especially regarding the Book of Mormon—it has been a tendency on the part of some to base their acceptance of a given explanation on its apologetic tone rather than on the relative strength of its argument and the evidence that can be adduced in its favor. To be sure, maintaining scholarly standards when dealing with questions that are related to one's faith can be difficult, but both faith and knowledge are the ultimate beneficiaries of doing so. Through quality peer review, source-checking, and dialogue with the

authors we hope to make each paper's argument as sound and rigorous as possible, and ask contributors to be patient with the reviewing and editing of their manuscripts.

Longtime readers of the *Journal* will notice a change in how we have cited the sources used in the articles. Rather than being placed in the back of the *Journal*, the sources for each article are cited in endnotes immediately following the article. We have also adopted a larger font for the references. All this has been done in an effort to make the references more accessible to readers interested in examining an author's sources for themselves.

Without further ado, then, we are pleased to present our readers with this issue of the *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture*, and at the same time issue a standing call for papers on the background, context, history, development, language, and meaning of latter-day scripture. The field, we believe, is wide-open, and we look forward to exploring it with you through the best efforts that faithful scholarship has to offer.

—The Editors