



NEWSLETTER

· RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER ·

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THE THIRD BOOK OF MORMON SYMPOSIUM HELD AT BYU

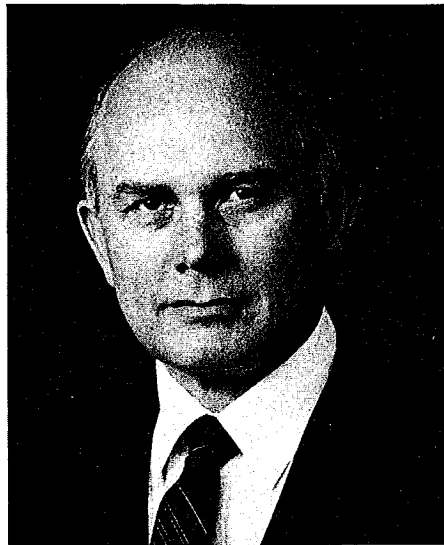
The Third Book of Mormon Symposium sponsored by the Religious Studies Center was held 8, 10, 11 October 1987, at Brigham Young University. All papers presented centered on 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon.

The three-day symposium culminated in a Sunday evening address by Elder Dallin H. Oaks, the keynote speaker. Using 2 Nephi to help distinguish between the meanings of agency and freedom, Elder Oaks, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, spoke on "Free Agency and Freedom."

Elder Oaks defined free agency as "... an exercise of the will, the power to choose," and freedom as "... the power and privilege to carry out our choices." He applied these two definitions first to the doctrine of the gospel, and then to our lives.

Elder Oaks noted that no one, not even Satan, can take our free agency away from us. It is a God-given gift we received long before we ever came to earth. However, our freedom to choose is often severely limited by several factors including natural laws, physical disabilities, our own actions, and the actions of others. These are conditions that come with mortality.

In application of this doctrine, Elder Oaks reminded us that although Satan cannot forcefully take away our free agency, he will gladly accept it if we offer it to him. When we surrender part of our will to another person or allow ourselves to become addicted to



Elder Dallin H. Oaks, keynote speaker for third annual Book of Mormon Symposium.

a substance or action, we allow Satan to take control of our agency. We must avoid these situations at all costs.

Some people use a popular excuse, "I was born that way," as a rationale for how they allow themselves to become addicted to a substance or action. Elder Oaks explained that although some people may have weaknesses for certain substances or activities, they still have their free agency to refuse to partake of them.

Dean Robert J. Matthews delivered a paper on "The Atonement of Jesus Christ" in the Saturday morning session of the symposium. Basing his remarks on 2 Nephi 9, Dean Matthews introduced Jacob—the younger brother

of Nephi—as one of "the greatest doctrinal, theological, and philosophical preachers within the Book of Mormon," along with his father Lehi. He said that Jacob's teachings about the need for the Atonement found in 2 Nephi 9 "are not stated with such clarity in any other place."

Noting that 2 Nephi 9 has four major themes, Bro. Matthews covered only two of them in detail: (1) the fall of Adam and the atonement of Jesus Christ and (2) the wisdom of the world compared to the revelations of God.

He said that the Bible mentions gospel teachings, but latter-day scripture enlightens the reader. For an example, 2 Nephi 9:5-7 explains that because of Adam's fall all men must die, and therefore must be resurrected from the dead, a familiar teaching found many places in the Bible. However, Jacob goes beyond that explanation of the resurrection and in 2 Nephi 9:8-9 strengthens our understanding of **why** the resurrection is necessary, explaining that our souls would become subject to Satan if we were not resurrected.

Bro. Matthews noted several reasons why people do not know and/or understand gospel truths. He said, "Spiritual truth is made known by the Spirit only to those who believe, repent, and prepare themselves to obtain it." Because most of the world has not followed these steps, it is without spiritual knowledge. Yet, this knowledge is so important that we can-

not be saved without it (D&C 131:6).

We must be very careful to be worthy to receive of the wisdom of God, as opposed to worldly teachings. Jacob warns in 2 Nephi 9:28 of the pride that comes with the learning of the world, yet concludes with, "But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God" (vs. 29). If we don't hearken to the counsels of God, "the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from [us] forever—yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints" (vs. 43).

Professor Rodney Turner, also of the religious faculty at BYU, delivered a paper on "The Lamanite Mark," noting that although it was through a curse that the Lord darkened the Lamanites' skin, it was also a blessing in disguise. Originally the mark of a dark skin was to keep the faithful Nephites from intermarrying with the unbelieving Lamanites so their race would remain pure; later that same mark kept the faithful Lamanites from intermarrying with the unbelieving Nephites as they reached their height of immorality in the days of Mosiah I.

Although we often speak of a darkened skin as the curse, the real curse the Lamanites suffered was the withdrawal of the Lord's Spirit. Bro. Turner stated, "The withdrawal of his Spirit is the death-knell of any civilized society (see D&C 63:32), for the absence of his Spirit inevitably means the presence of the spirit of the devil."

Bro. Turner concluded that "A spiritually delightful people are the Lord's covenant people" and "In that day when the 'great division' (2 Nephi 30:10) has cleansed the earth of its rebellious inhabitants, contentions will cease, peace will prevail, and . . . there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture" (1 Nephi 22:25).

Dr. S. Michael Wilcox spoke on "Nephi's Message to the 'Gentiles'" based on chapters 25 through 33 of 2 Nephi. Bro. Wilcox pointed out that 2 Nephi 26:12-13 contains the central theme of Nephi's teachings: ". . . it must needs be that the Gentiles be convinced also that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God . . ." (vs. 12; italics added).

Bro. Wilcox quoted the Prophet Joseph Smith in *Lectures on Faith* as to three necessary elements for faith in God: (1) "the idea that [God] actually exists"; (2) "a correct idea of his character, perfection, and attributes," and (3) "an actual knowledge that the

course of life which [one] is pursuing is according to his [God's] will" (Lecture 3, vss. 3-5).

Bro. Wilcox concluded that "The Book of Mormon must always be at the center of our conversion efforts. To attempt to convince the Gentiles, Lamanites or Jews of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truths of his gospel through any other method is bound to terminate in frustration." (See Nephi's testimony in 2 Nephi 33:10.)

Others presenting papers at the Third Book of Mormon Symposium were the following: Todd G. Andersen, Alvin K. Benson, Edward J. Brandt, Robert A. Cloward, Larry E. Dahl, S. Brent Farley, H. Dean Garrett, Leland Gentry, Richard Holzapfel, Daniel H. and Victor L. Ludlow, Robert L. Millet, Monte S. Nyman, Steven L. Olsen, Bruce A. Van Orden, Alan K. Parrish, Rex C. Reeve, Jr., Stephen E. Robinson, Joseph B. Romney, A. Don Sorensen, Grant R. Underwood, John W. Welch, Dennis L. Largey, Gerald N. Lund, and Susan Black.

Selected papers from this symposium will shortly be published by The Religious Studies Center and Bookcraft in volume three of the Book of Mormon Symposium series, *The Book of Mormon: 2nd Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The fourth annual Book of Mormon symposium, 24-25 September 1988, will address the topic "Jacob through the Words of Mormon: To Learn with Joy." Those interested should submit proposed outlines to Monte S. Nyman, 156 JSB, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602, by 1 June 1988.

Outlines should include the title, general theme, and major points of the paper. Papers will be selected on the basis of subject and relevance to the stated text.

Accepted participants will be notified by 1 July 1988, and the written papers will be due 15 August 1988 for review and critique. All participants will need to arrange their own funding to attend the symposium.

Selected papers will be published.



Doctor Susan Black, compiler for *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830 to 1848*.

HISTORICAL RECORD PROJECT COMPLETED

Dr. Susan Black, associate professor of church history at Brigham Young University, is nearing the completion of a compilation of historical records of the Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830 to 1848, a work anticipated to take nearly 50 volumes of 1000 pages each. The project has thus far taken seven years of dedicated effort.

Dr. Black cites as her inspiration for this work the directive given to Joseph Smith by revelation in April 1830, charging that they keep "a list of the names of the several members uniting themselves with the church since the last conference" (D&C 20:82).

Subsequently, in D&C 47:1, 3-4, the responsibility for recording the names of the membership was given to Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer, respectively. The records these men kept include significant events happening to significant people, but information about the general population of the Church has remained relatively unknown.

Dr. Black explained: "One purpose of this multi-volume text is a humble attempt to develop a list of all those who were members of the Church during these early years. It is also an attempt to acknowledge, to highlight, and to reconstruct the contributions and commitment of the [general] membership of the Church from 1830-1848." She also explained that

even with all the work she has done for these volumes, many of the Saints remain unidentified and therefore their stories cannot yet be told. But, as their names and information regarding their lives are found, their membership will be listed in an addendum.

What makes this project so outstanding are the many other benefits derived from making this information so accessible. For instance, finding and listing the names of these early Saints has made it possible for them to receive their temple blessings. In the past, many baptisms, priesthood ordinations, and other ordinances were not systematically recorded. Through this compiled membership list, the Church Genealogical Department has approved performance of these ordinances which are now being completed (25,000 to date).

As an individual Saint is identified, all pertinent dates are listed, similar to those included on a genealogical family group sheet. Then available biographical information is listed. Consequently, some entries are several pages long, while others may fill only three or four lines. Also included are notations about differences in dates, spellings of names and a list of the sources of the information. This compilation is a genealogist's dream and more.

James S. Rosenvall, of Computer Services at Brigham Young University, has been the principal contributor of a multi-faceted computer program, known as Word Cruncher, which has enabled this vast quantity of data to be stored, analyzed, and printed. Rosenvall's efforts are even more commendable because they were donated, as were those of Monte Shelley, Sue Ann Harvey and Sandy Mierish, computer specialists.

This computer program allows users (researchers and private individuals) to request specific types of information regarding demographics, trends, and almost anything imaginable about any person or persons in the list.

At the present time, the LDS church holds the copyright to the microfiche and is planning to distribute those texts worldwide, making the information easy to access by anyone. The copyright to the microfiche was given to the Church by BYU and Dr. Black. The question arises concerning the distribution of the printed texts (the copyright for the hardbound and computer program being held by BYU).

With an estimated production cost of fifty dollars per volume, the fifty volume set would come to a nice round \$2,500.

Dr. Black must rely on the generosity of those who may envision the importance of this work. She feels her work will not be completed until printed copies can be provided for such places such as the Library of Congress, key libraries in the United States and England, and the main visitors' centers of the Church, particularly those at historical sites. Money is still needed to finance the production of hardbound copies and to purchase the computer program which allows users to index all the information together.

The project is far from completion, but the personal satisfaction Dr. Black has gained will help her finish it. Though she may not be credited for compiling this information by most people, those who use her books will be grateful that someone had the fortitude to do this work.



Darwin L. Thomas, editor of *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*.

BOOK REVIEW

THE RELIGION AND FAMILY CONNECTION

The Religious Studies Center is proud to announce the publication of *The Religion and Family Connection: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by Darwin L. Thomas, professor of sociology at Brigham Young University.

This publication is a compilation of research studies carried out by numerous well-known sociologists with the intent of expanding the knowledge of how people influence, or are influenced by, various religions. They have succeeded in providing insights and additional information to their field. The chapters are well written and give a wide range of experience to the reader.

Tim B. Heaton of the Family and Demographic Research Institute at BYU has contributed a chapter of particular interest to LDS readers. In "Four C's of the Mormon Family: Chastity, Conjugal, Children, and Chauvinism," he presents evidence to indicate that members of the Church have not followed national trends for changing morality during the twentieth century. He builds a discussion of how the Church and the family reciprocally reinforce each other. Another important point made by Heaton is that the Mormon family is not static. Changes do occur, but they are not in conflict with the doctrines of the Church.

A full-scale research study is explained by **Marie Cornwall** of BYU in "The Influence of Three Agents of Religious Socialization: Family, Church, and Peers." The major conclusions are that family socialization is particularly important for the development of personal religiosity, the Church shows no significant influence on religiosity, and peer group association has a greater direct impact on institutional religiosity.

Darwin L. Thomas contributes the concluding chapter, "Future Prospects for Religion and Family Studies: The Mormon Case." After a discussion of the lack of substantial research related to religion and family, he presents the results of a study done in 1985. A questionnaire sent to members of the LDS church returned considerable information on the religious life and practices of the people as well as information about family composition and practices. Major findings included evidence that the experiences in the family of orientation (closeness to parents and parents' religious attendance) are related to the measure of religiosity and dimensions of family functioning (marital and conjugal satisfaction) as well as adult well-being.

Other contributors to the book are: Howard Bahr and Bruce Chadwick, professors of sociology at Brigham Young University; Jay Y. Brodbar-

Nemzar, Jerusalem Fellows; Merlin B. Brinkerhoff and Marlene Mackie, professors of sociology, University of Calgary; Gerald N. Stott of South Eastern Missouri State; Lawrence O. Clayton, an ordained United Methodist minister; Mark A. Schroll, adjunct instructor in the Physics Department at Kearney State College; James V. Spickard, research director at the Cultural Development Institute; and Horst Jurgen Helle, professor of sociology at Ludwig-Maximilian's University; Letha Dawson Scanzoni, full-time professional writer; Arland Thornton, research scientist at the Institute for Social Research and associate professor of sociology at the University of Michigan; Steven Stack, associate professor of sociology, Auburn University; Patrick H. McNamara, associate professor of sociology at the University of New Mexico; Marc Olshan, associate professor of sociology at Bethany College; and William V. D'Antonio, executive officer of the American Sociological Association.

SYMPOSIUM ANNOUNCEMENT

The Lectures on Faith symposium will be held 18-19 March 1988 at BYU. For information write Dr. Larry E. Dahl, 156 JSB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The BYU David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies announces that its second annual Near Eastern Studies Symposium will be held in March 1988. Papers on ancient or modern Near Eastern history, politics, Bible, religion, archaeology, etc., are requested. Both faculty and students may submit proposals to Dennis Thompson, 216 HRCB, Carrel 4 (or call 374-6783 in the evenings), by 29 January 1988.

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